



**A Critical Study  
Of  
Ibn Taymia's Response to Christianity**

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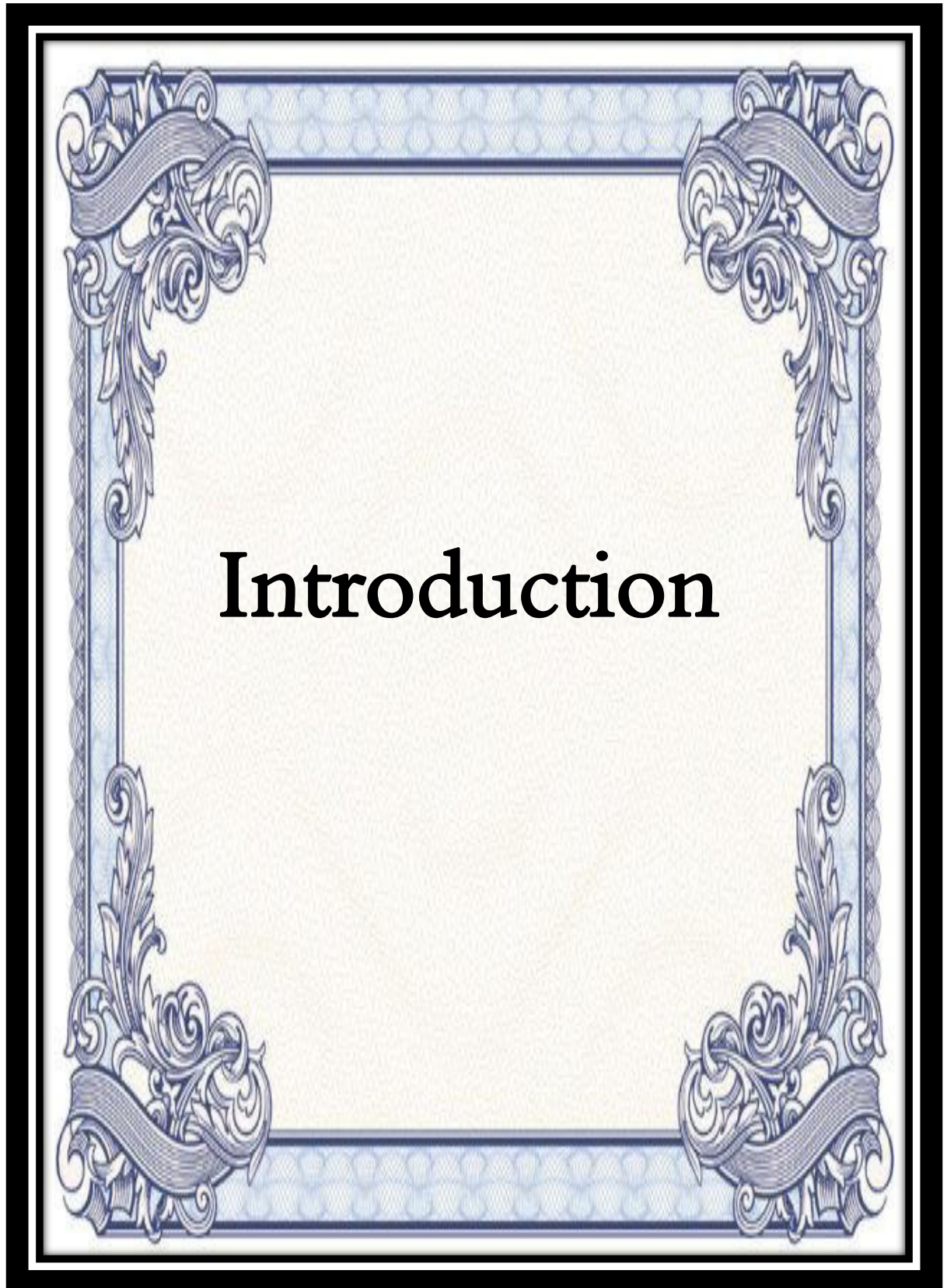
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## **Introduction**

Historical, political and religious factors occasioned to a vast interfaith polemical literature between Muslims and Christians. Along history, there had been many such polemical responses, in which the respective writers exerted to rebut the opponents' doctrines and prove their own. The crusaders and their political existence in the holy land and elsewhere, and their collusion with the Tatars against the Muslims at some epochs of history induced many antipathetic reactions that ranged from military to academic. Besides, the Islamic duty of defending and propagating Islam imposed and provoked the responses of many Muslim scholars. Among the very prominent responses is that which Ibn Taymiyyah, who lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, launched. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote prolifically almost about every subject of religious import. Regarding refuting Christianity, apart from the small tracts and chapters in different books, he wrote a voluminous book challenging their assertions against Islam and disproving Christian allegations and doctrines.

### **Significance of the Study**

This is an attempt to carry out a critical study of Ibn Taymiyyah's response to Christianity. This response was triggered by a letter Ibn Taymiyyah received from Paul of Antioch, the bishop of Sidon See. Ibn Taymiyyah who was always keen to counter attack any innovation in religion from within the Muslim community could not have condoned this daring transgression in which the necessity of Islam as the only valid means for salvation is challenged. He, therefore, ventured to write a long, cogent response where (as usual) he utilized his unmatched polemical power to keep the Muslim's theology in its pristine shape.

Ibn Taymiyyah mentions at the introducing pages the main points that were claimed by the Christian bishop in the letter. They can be reiterated thus:

- That Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was not sent to the Christians. Rather, he was sent exclusively to the pagan Arabs and the Quran testifies to this.
- Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spoke highly about their religion in the Quran.

- The Torah, the Gospels, the Psalms, etc., support their faith in the hypostases, the Trinity, the incarnation and the like. Therefore, they should uphold fast to them since no proof to the contrary is found.
- Sound reason substantiates their religion and creeds.
- They are monotheists and that anything in Christianity that suggests anthropomorphism is like the anthropomorphic texts available in Islam.
- What Christ had brought was perfect leaving no place for any later modification or addition.

These points stirred up Ibn Taymiyyah and motivated him to make his efforts and write such a long defense. However, as Islam and the Muslims rather than the Christians are his main concern, the response seems to be addressed to the Muslims to demonstrate that the Christians lost the way to paradise through their innovation and alteration in their religion. He attempts to demonstrate to the Muslims and Christians that the remaining evidence in the Christians' scripture is enough to guide them to the ultimate truth that Islam represents.

The writings of different scholars from different cultural backgrounds varied regarding the disposition of Ibn Taymiyyah and his approach in dealing with the alien ideologies and religions. Some portray him as allowing for religious pluralism where they claim that he had no problem with those believing in the original teachings of their religions although they do not believe in the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his message. Others depict him with a negatively intolerant and intolerable dogmatic particularism. Others yet demonstrate him to be a man with a strange unpredictable nature (or having a screw loose) probably irritated by the slightest difference or resistance. The reason behind all these differences is perhaps incomprehensive study of the man or of Islam itself. Such incomplete investigations and impulsive and biased judgments led to this fluctuation.

The Christians had been the avowed enemies of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah cannot forget the crusades and their devastative action in the Muslim lands nor can he forget their alliances with the Tartars against the Muslims. In his response to the Christians is a

great chance to know his approach to them and decide where he stands between the alleged particularism and compromise, taking into consideration the Christian Muslim interactions. His response would naturally reveal whether he was biased against the Christians on the bases of the historical animosities and encroachments, or he was of the view that they were wrong only because they did not follow the original teachings of their religions.

## **Literature Review**

Apart from the papers and books authored on Ibn Taymiyyah's response to Christians each dealing with the matter from different aspects, the PhD thesis written by Maryam Zāmil entitled *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyyah Min Al-Nasrāniyah* (Ibn Taymiyyah's Attitude Towards Christianity) is the most voluminous work dedicated to this area. The thesis by Mariam Zāmil dealt with the response to Christianity in which she herself tried to respond to them. The thesis' lengthy discussions seemed primarily directed to how to refute Christianity and prove it wrong, albeit Ibn Taymiyyah's answer was also investigated only to detect his attitude towards Christianity.

Gona Grigoryan's dissertation entitled *Anti-Christian Polemics of Ibn Taymiyyah: Corruption of Scriptures* is another work on the topic. However, as the title suggests, the work is only concerned about the corruption of scriptures. In the words of the writer, "this thesis has sought to explain the role of the prophetic knowledge in the theological outlook of Ibn Taymiyyah through examining the concept of *tahrīf*, [distortion of text]."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the discussion centered on how the Christians garbled the text of their scripture.

Ismail Abdullah wrote a paper entitled *Tawḥīd and Trinity: A Study of Ibn Taymiyyah's al-Jawāb al Ṣaḥīḥ*. As the title suggests and in the words of the author, "The purpose of this paper is to analyze the methodology and approach adopted by Ibn Taymiyyah in refuting the Trinitarian concept elucidated and defended by Church fathers".<sup>2</sup> However, his conclusion was partial. He did not touch all the principles underlying Ibn Taymiyyah's approach. He was content to mention that Ibn Taymiyyah asserted both revelation and reason in the quest for religious truth.

## **Aims of the Study**

However, this study is not concerned with how to respond to Christianity as much as it is concerned with discovering Ibn Taymiyyah's approach in responding to them.

The study seeks to fulfill the following aims:

- To identify the approach he adopts in his responses to the Christians. What are the epistemological and metaphysical foundations that he bases his responses on? What kind of evidences and explanations he adduces to convince his adversaries?
- Allegedly, Ibn Taymiyyah is believed by many to be rigid and intolerant towards the opponents and to the popular faith. This study will unravel the real situation and expose much of the personal features of Ibn Taymiyyah.
- The Muslims are still holding dialogue with the Christians and this study will help in boosting this move through providing cogent argumentations that the two faiths will have to accept.

## **The Overall Framework of the Thesis**

For the fulfillment of these aims, the presentation had to follow a logical sequence. Therefore, as the reader needs to know the background of the dialogue of Ibn Taymiyyah with the Christians, the thesis starts chapter one with dealing with the times of Ibn Taymiyyah. In this chapter, the political, the social and the intellectual conditions of the Muslim world are described in details. Here, the military and political activism is delineated along with The Muslims' endeavor for survival in the midst of the collective attack from the Christians and the Tartars. Then the social fabric in the Mamlūk time is discussed and how it governs the relationship between the various social strata. Moreover, the intellectual progress and recession are discussed to unravel the general atmosphere in which Ibn Taymiyyah had to face many hardships that are dictated by the mentality of the time. This, moreover, depicts much of the scientific character of Ibn Taymiyyah, and how he deals with critical situations, based on his knowledge of the Quran and *Sunnah*.

The second chapter deals with the life of Ibn Taymiyyah: his education, character, debates, trials, death and legacy. This helps in discovering the personality of Ibn Taymiyyah, his religiosity and his academics credentials testified by the contemporary historians. It also reveals the motives of the attacks of his opponents. His debates with the various Muslim groups and sects sheds light on a great portion of his polemics which are not much different from his polemical interactions with the proponents of other religions.

The third chapter deals with his response proper. It is devoted to how Ibn Taymiyyah sees Christ and how he refutes the Christians' allegations regarding him. The Christians consider him as God and son of God. The chapter discusses the topic from the philosophical, scriptural and rational points of view, and delivers much on the way Ibn Taymiyyah always undermines the pleas of his opponents.

The fourth chapter deals with the alteration of the message of Christ as seen by Ibn Taymiyyah. It discusses Ibn Taymiyyah's views regarding the authenticity of the Christian tradition and how the Christians transmitted their traditions and thereby influenced their dogma. He demonstrates how the Christians tampered with the original text and invented new theology alien to the guidance of prophets. The result was a departure from the divine message to synthetic concepts traceable nowhere in the scripture. The major crime committed was the patent contradiction to the oneness of God, which is the crux of all divine guidance to humanity.

The fifth chapter examines the concept of prophethood. The Christians claimed that Christianity is a complete way of life capable of availing its followers salvation even if they do not follow the last messenger. Rather, it is superior and more comprehensive than Islam. Moreover, they claimed that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent only to the Arabs. To have a round up response, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the proofs of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the universality of his message, and the criteria of authentic prophethood. This chapter is an investigation of Ibn Taymiyyah's approach of disproving the Christians' allegations regarding prophethood.



## Methodology

To render the study authentic the researcher examines the author's own writings in Arabic, especially his book *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ Liman Baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ*, which forms the backbone of this work. In a like manner, most of the books consulted are those belonging to the historical epoch under question or the author's own writings. The historical accounts laid down by the contemporaries of Ibn Taymiyyah were given precedence, as they are the most authentic references regarding this epoch of history. Moreover, regarding the data on Christianity, the Bible and the writings of the early Christian writers were consulted, although the writings of contemporary Christian writers also formed part of the consulted references.

As Ibn Taymiyyah's method is characterized by discursive and repetitive argumentation, the reader finds it difficult to find out the response of the same thing together. The researcher attempts to juxtapose the answers so as to make it easy for the reader with this thematic organization to locate answers of the same problem together. Moreover, the researcher carries out an analytical and critical study wherein the views of Ibn Taymiyyah on christinaity are crosschecked and compared with the writings of the Christians along history, to ensure his full understanding of Christianity, on the one hand, and to check how well he adheres to his prinicples, on the other. At the conclusion section, moreover, the various findings are grouped together to find out the various implications that can be detected from the study.

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<sup>1</sup> Gona Grigoryan, *Anti-Christian Polemics of Ibn Taymiyyah: Corruption Of Scripture*, (unpublished) MA thesis, European Central University, Budapest, 2011, p. 63

<sup>2</sup> Ismail Abdullah, "Tawḥīd and Trinity: A Study of Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Jawāb al Ṣaḥīḥ*", *Intellectual Intercourse*, Vol. 14, 2006, P. 90



**CHAPTER ONE**

*The Age*

*Of*

*Ibn Taymiyyah*



## **1. THE AGE OF IBN TAYMIYYAH**

Since Ibn Taymiyyah is the main theme in this study, it is pertinent to have a cursory look into the political, socio-religious and intellectual background. In the following sections, he will be silhouetted against this background.

### **1.1 The Political Situation**

Ibn Taymiyyah was born in a very critical situation not for the Muslim prosperity in different aspects of life but it was like that for Islam itself. After the sublime expansion of the Muslim rule in the east and west, the whole situation turns to mark the end of Islam as a civilisation not only as a state. The caliph who was considered the highest authority lost his hold on things and the whole state of affairs was controlled by his entourage. He himself was engrossedly busy in pursuing his personal needs and corporeal desires. There were many Muslim states in different parts of the Muslim world. The Khwarizm kingdom was in the east, extending from the Transoxiana to the Persia. This was led by powerful leaders, and formed a formidable power bordering the Mongol Empire. Yemen and Hijaz<sup>1</sup> had their independent rulers, each time changing, due to the absence of stability. Egypt and Sham were under the *Ayyūbids* and then the Mamlūks. Islam in the west (Andalusia) was already contracting, and the Muslim-Muslim conflicts undermined their power and thereby their respect and awe in the hearts of the Christians. The Seljūks had their own rule to the north of Sham. Moreover, the relationship between these Muslim statelets was characterised by hostilities and incessant mutual encroachments.

The Christians were prowling in the west waiting their chance to jump and attack the Muslims, who were already fatigued through disintegration and fragmentation. Realising the situation of the Muslims, they coveted their lands and wealth. They made many extremely genocidal campaigns, indiscriminately atrocious pillages<sup>2</sup>, which extirpated more than seventy thousand people in Jerusalem alone,<sup>3</sup> with religious people at the top of their priorities. They did not spare children and women. Within Solomon's Temple “about ten thousand were beheaded. If you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with the blood of the slain. What more shall I tell? Not one of them was allowed to live. They did not spare the women and children.”<sup>4</sup> This fact was

affirmed by the Christians themselves who witnessed the incident.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the Muslims who used to take the women as slaves and wives, they, in the words of the Christian historians, as they did in Antioch, “pierced their bellies with their lances”.<sup>6</sup> By the time of Ibn Taymiyyah, the seventh campaign (Crusade) transpired.

### **1.1.1 The Origin of the Mamlūks**

Ibn Taymiyyah lived during the Mamlūk rule. Therefore, it is pertinent here to talk about the origin of these rulers. Literally, the word ‘*mamlūk*’ in Arabic means ‘slave’. The Mamlūk sultans were originally slaves. People in political authority<sup>7</sup> used to buy young slaves from the traders of the time and entrust them to the care of the formal centers assigned for the education and training of these children.<sup>8</sup> On their arrival at these camps they are medically vetted and then allotted in the various places to be militarily trained and exposed to intensive courses in Arabic, Islamic education, etc. Al-Maqrīzī<sup>9</sup> (d. 845 AH) reported that these slaves were first taught the Quran by an appointed *faqīh* (jurist) who would come and teach them the Quran, the Islamic moral manners and writing. They were also disciplined to regularly observe prayers and remembrance. When a slave reaches the prepubescent age, he would be taught elementary *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

These Mamlūks were of diverse origins: Turks, Mongols, Tatars, Slavs, Spanish and some other white slaves. However, at the time of the *Bahri* Mamlūks<sup>10</sup> they were preponderantly from the Qafjak and Caucasus, whereas during the *Jerkis* Mamlūks they were mostly from the Jerks.<sup>11</sup>

### **1.1.2 Rise of the Mamlūks**

The Ayyūbids exhausted themselves and depleted their resources in internal strives and jealous political rivalry, leaving unmanned frontiers susceptible to the enemies’ attack to terminate the already languishing power of the Muslims once they wished. The Frankish invaders had installed Christian rule inside of the Muslim lands. They established emirates inside the Muslim lands. In the midst of intoxicating animosities, the Muslim rival rulers even sought the support of the Franks against one another, and at times some of them gravitated this alliance through promising to concede Muslim lands, including Jerusalem, which Salāḥuddīn had taken great pains to regain. Since the restoration of

Jerusalem in 1245 CE, Innocent IV and Louis IX had been preparing for attacking Egypt and the Muslim lands. The aim of the mission was twofold: to retake Jerusalem and to establish a Mongol-Christian alliance against the Muslims and surmount them from different directions. This would lead to spreading Catholicism on the one hand and gain dominance over the resources of the Muslims and over the trade routes on the other.

The Muslims had bitter experience with the atrocious invasion of the Christians. When they were mobilised first by the pope, they launched the campaign and faced eastward with the determination to extirpate the Muslims and crush their existence. The town Ma'arras was among the first to fall in their uncouth hands in 1098. They killed men, children and women indiscriminately. They mutilated and committed the most intolerable massacres, history has ever known. At the intoxication of victory or hunger, they turned into cannibals. They ate half roasted corpses. This has been mentioned by their historian eyewitnesses.<sup>12</sup> They devoured the flesh of the Muslim men, and children were grilled and eaten. This merciless ferocity was perpetrated in many of the cities that were predestined to fall under their cavalier and inhuman march. They used to repeat slogans purporting their mission, namely to exterminate the Muslims. The Jews and Christians were not spared this indiscriminate pillage.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, they burned the Jews in the lands they conquered.<sup>14</sup>

The Mongol and Christians exchanged embassies and wanted to inflict a collective attack against the common enemy, the Muslims, and occupy their land. However, this did not come off, for the Mongols wanted to rule over Europe and therefore sent to the Papacy to recognise their sovereignty and declare Europe's subordination and vow obedience to the Khan. Although this alliance failed, this did not end the aspirations of the pope. He sent a Dominican priest to the Mongol leader whom they met at Tabriz in 645/1247. Now the Mongol leader showed approval and renewed hope in the pope's heart. He sent in turn two of his men with the mission. This orchestration solidified the stance of Louis IX in the seventh crusade. While still in Cyprus, Louis IX received two Nestorian men despatched by the Khan, to prove his support. Again, Dominican men headed by Longjumean carried a mobile church as a present along with some other things to Europe. Successive mutual embassies culminated in strengthening the relationship between the

superpowers manifested in the exemption of taxes levied on Christians in the Mongol territories. Moreover, the visitation of a high level mission headed by Hithium conducted to the collective attack against the Caliphate. The Nestorians played great role in this concord; therefore they held high positions in the service of the Khan. The others were Armenians and Georgians. Therefore, the entourage of Halagu as well as his own wife were Christians and played a great role in his attack against the Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

This called for instant attempts of a strong ruler to reunite the Muslims under one banner. Najmuddīn Ayyūb rose to carry out this mission. However, as he needed a strong and loyal army under his disposal, he resorted to buying and rearing young slaves in the manner mentioned above. He gradually tried to fight for unity and through these slaves he gathered strength.<sup>16</sup>

### **1.1.3 Al-Manşūrah Battle and the Mamlūks**

The Frankish invaders reached Dimyāṭ (Damietta). There they committed the most heinous crimes to the natives.<sup>17</sup> They killed, raped and plundered the city. They had no human senses whatsoever. Although the city fell immediately, the Muslims could transfer the battle to al-Manşūrah, wherein they smote the invaders a deadly blow in 647/1249. The volunteers from various parts of the Muslim world came to the rescue of the Muslim lands and were led by the Mamlūks such as Baybars, Farisuddīn Aqṭai and Ezzuddīn Aybak and many of the Mamlūks who epitomized the most skilled and bravest warriors. They were able to handle the whole affair aptly. Amidst these tumults Najmuddīn<sup>18</sup> died, thus vacating the scene for the Mamlūks to emerge as the most expert leaders who were able to overtake and carry out the national responsibilities the Ayyūbid rulers shirked. This battle and the restive situation in general acted as the labour for the birth of the Mamlūk rule. The nearest to the throne at this juncture was the wife of Najmuddīn, who was a slave maid probably of Armenian origin. At the political stage, this woman, Shajaratuddur managed the state affairs, and in the battlefield Baybars played the role of the commander-in-chief. His logistic manoeuvres, military tactics and superb expertise outwit the plans of the Count leader (Louis' brother), who himself fell prey to his vanity and was killed. The news of the demise of the last Ayyūbid leader was intentionally concealed.

At this juncture, Shajaratu'ddur<sup>19</sup> was faced with a chorus of protests. Although she demonstrated a great dexterity in tackling the responsibilities of the state, being a woman, she failed to gain the consent of the people. Therefore, she sent for Toran Shah, the son of Najmuddīn. When he arrived he introduced efficient innovations into the plan. The battle culminated into the seizure of Louis IX, the leader of the campaign, who was subsequently ransomed. As a result of this triumph of the Muslim forces, much wealth accumulated as loot.

After this victory, Torān Shah turned on the major contributors of the victory. He started threatening the princess and portrayed bitter dislike for the Mamlūk leaders, who came to know that he was harbouring intentions threatening their lives. By this he signed his death warrant, as they concurred to get rid of him, which they did no later. This incident hit the final nail in the coffin of the Ayyūbids, who had no longer any pretext for remaining on the throne. Nothing would now preclude the Mamlūks' progress to power. They considered themselves as the inheritors of their masters. No question of appointing any Egyptian. The Egyptians had no claim to rule as the Mamlūks proved to be the real defenders of the lands. However, they opposed the rule of Shajaratu'ddur, making the Mamlūks appoint Ezzuddīn Aybak sultan<sup>20</sup>. He and shajaruddur were killed for political reasons, and power rolled down to Qutuz.

#### **1.1.4 The Mongol Threat**

By this time, the Mongols had established the largest ever awe-inspiring empire, extending from China in the east to Hungary and Prussia in the west, under the leadership of Genkis Khan (550/1155-625/1227). They devastated the Khwarizmi kingdom, "which at the height of its power stretched from the Ural mountains to the Persian Gulf and from the Euphrates to the Indus including two Iranian provinces of Khuzestan and Pars,"<sup>21</sup> in no time. In Bukhara, Samarqand and all cities, they pillaged, plundered and spared no one on their way. When people appealed for peace, the Tatars ostensibly granted them peace, and drove them to help them fight those who took refuge in the well-fortified castle, making them fight their fellows. Once their job was over, the Tatars reneged and killed all and sundry people and demolished the city.<sup>22</sup> This betrayal was repeated in many of their raids.



Although the Khwarizmi kingdom was part of the Muslim world, none of their neighbours came to their succour. With this might and atrocity, the Mongols scared people and rulers, to the extent that they forced the rulers to betray each other. The whole setting was in favour of the Mongol attack.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the internal treachery of the vizier Ibn al-‘Alqamī, (who sacked many soldiers in the Muslim army as redundant and weakened it), and some others, in the caliph’s court, facilitated Mongols’ attack of Baghdad in 656/ 1258, wherein they did no less than what they had done in Samarqand and the other cities.

In the year 657/1259, news reached Damascus portending the Mongol attack. Being imbued with fear, the king of Damascus and Mosul, who had been part of the Ayyūbid polity, tried to win the pleasure of Mongols by sending gifts as a sign of recognition. Although Quṭuz was not the ruler, he discussed the issue with the elders and decided to fight back the Mongol invaders. He threw away the minor ruler of the time and proceeded to the throne, with complete determination to liberate the Muslims from this catastrophic attack. The Mongol barbaric assault on the eastern lands had not been obliterated from living memory.

When the Mongols entered Damascus, the Muslim masses felt miserable, whereas the Christians rejoiced at it and translated their joy into humiliating acts against the Muslims in the city. For example, they threw wine at the faces of people and at the doorsteps of mosques. They carried the Cross and used to chant words, abusing Islam. They also commanded people to pay homage to the Cross as they passed by them. This hurt the Muslims tremendously.<sup>24</sup>

Then he started rearranging things in Egypt, and preparing for the encounter with the most invincible force of the time, and at the same time he could convince the Ayyubid leader in Damascus to break away from the Mongols.<sup>25</sup> However, the latter succumbed to fear and fled leaving the city bare for the Mongols. The head of the Mongols (Katabghanūn) was a Nestorian Christian, who sent to the fleeing ruler and arrested him.

### **1.1.5 ‘Ayn Jālūt the Decisive Battle**

In Ramadan, 26 (658/1260), the Muslim and the Mongol armies met at Gaza, (‘Ayn Jalūt). Qutuz sent Baybars with a small expedition to delude the Mongol army and draw the whole focus of the army to them. While engrossed in the combat, the true Muslim army came under the leadership of Qutuz, to resolve the issue to their favour. Thus the Muslims won the battle, demolishing the psychological defeatism that abode in the Muslim hearts for a long time along with fragmentation and the factional jealousy of the Ayyūbids. This also warranted further import of slaves.

The Mamlūks now appeared as the mightiest force eligible to defend the Muslim world. After slight sojourn at Gaza, Qutuz decided to embark for Egypt. He thought he had consolidated his rule with this great achievement. People were impatiently waiting for his arrival at Egypt. However fate pre-emptively stirred the feuds of Baybars, who brought his life to end, to be his ‘rightful’ successor.

Despite the unprecedented success, the Mamlūks were still suffering the legitimacy drawback. They were basically slaves, and slavery is antithetic to sovereignty. To get out of this dilemma, Baybars appointed an Abbasid decent caliph, to virtually continue the chain, and win the legitimacy through this façade.

### **1.1.6 The Preparation against the Crusade Emirates**

This time the focus of the Mamlūks was directed to the crusader emirates, as the ‘Ayn Jalūt incurred a deadly blow to the Mongols enough to deter their aggression for some time. In order to attack the Christian emirates, Baybars tried to ally with the neighbouring forces lest they should come to the aid of the crusader emirates if he launched raids against them. He signed many friendship and alliance treaties with the western countries such as Roman Empire, Sicily and Napoli. He built good relations with Alfonso X, the king of Spain and even asked the hand of his daughter. He did the same with the leaders of the eastern countries such as Berk Khan, the leader of the Golden Horde, who was the first to embrace Islam and whose kingdom extended from the Black Sea to Turkistan in the east. More interestingly, Baybars used to make alliances with some of the crusaders to attack the others.

He also installed a communication System (*al-barīd*) which acted as his intelligence and correspondence network. From Damascus to Cairo news could be communicated in three days. He, furthermore, built the marine navy for the protection of the country in times of peace and war. He also bought more slaves of his nationality to reinforce his power. All these were precursory indications for the imminent attack against the Franks, who at times helped the Mongols and even provided shelter for them in their citadels. These Christian strongholds were more dangerous than the Mongols who soon melted in the Islamic civilisation and contributed to its enhancement. Unlike the Christians, the Mongols brought with them their pagan intellectual heritage which had no market in the new land. The Christians were grasping strategic areas on the sea inside the Muslim lands. They had three emirates: the Emirate of Antioch, the Emirate of Tripoli (Lebanon) and the Emirate of Jerusalem. Baybars made many assaults against the Christian emirates, and contributed too much in regaining the lands they captured.

### **1.1.7 Precautionary Measures against Contingent Mongol Attacks**

Just in the same manner Baybars fortified the Muslim lands through a network of alliances including that with the Mongol leader, Berk Khan. Moreover, he conquered Asia Minor from the hands of the Seljuks.

This conquest marked the highest point in the achievements of the Mamlūk ruler, who spent seventeen years fighting for the cause of Islam and the Muslims. People loved him too much and were very much delighted at the great glory he has retrieved for the Muslim world. He never relaxed throughout this period. Therefore, his tenure was characterised with stability as well as superb victories over internal and external forces, unlike the ten years before him which were characterised by tumults and turpitudes. After a life busy with reconquering robbed Muslim lands, Baybars died in 676/1277.<sup>26</sup>

After the two minor sons of Baybars were successively thrown away, Al-Manşūr Qalawūn became king in 678/1279. Some opposition arose, and the Mongols wanted to exploit it but he could soon overcome it. However, In 680, they attacked Mongol-ruled Hums in large multitudes. After too much bloodshed from the two sides, the Muslims triumphed. Although some of the Mongol rulers converted to Islam, their relations with

the Mamlūks kept fluctuating. In the year 699 AH, there came news of an imminent Mongol invasion, which stirred the situation and scared the society. Fare prices hiked as a result of the migration wave. In this invasion Muslims were defeated. This paved the way for the Mongols to progress to Damascus. This threat called for a collective opinion of the Damascene dignitaries and scholars, who agreed to seek peace for people from the Mongol leader, Qāzān, which he granted.<sup>27</sup>

Some were of the opinion that the citadel should surrender too for the safety of the people. Here Ibn Taymiyyah opposed this opinion, and urged the security board not to concede it whatsoever. Then the Mongols attacked the city, killed people, took women and children as prisoners, and stole valuable books. The places where the Christians lived helped the Mongols in their attack. The whole city became in their grasp except for the citadel. Although, a farman was read out for the people, the Mongols continued their violent actions in the region, killing and vandalising. They installed ballistae to attack the citadel, which did not surrender. In order to surround it from all directions they set fire to the surrounding buildings. People seldom went out of their houses in fear of being forced to fill up the trench around the citadel. Mosques were almost neglected. Those who were forced at times to come out for anything they needed, used to wear the Mongol attire for camouflage. Whoever appeared out he was not certain to come back to his family. Then Qāzān left Shām and appointed some of his men and an army to protect it pending his return the coming autumn, as he said on his departure.<sup>28</sup> However, they left the city, on hearing of the arrival of an Egyptian army, leaving the city with no guard. The citizens were assigned to guard the walls and defend the city against any security threat. Ibn Taymiyyah used to go round and recite verses of the Quran encouraging these guard men and reminding them of the reward promised for them by Allah.

Moreover, in the year 700/1301, news reached Damascus of a new Mongol raid. This infused fear and disturbance in the entire city. They took flight to different parts such as Egypt, and the other Shāmi cities. Great scholars were not an exception. This deportation caused the transportation to be at a premium, and therefore fares hiked. Due to this migration people started selling their clothes and luggage at entirely low prices. Ibn Taymiyyah did his best to drive people into *jihād*. He urged them to defend their lands

with their souls and money. Moreover, he went to the soldiers in the citadel, encouraged them and promised them reward from Allah and also assured them victory over their enemies. He convinced them by saying that the money spent on travel would rather be on this preparation for war. This is a rewardable act whereas fleeing would avail them nothing.<sup>29</sup>

The Egyptian army returned to Egypt and Ibn Taymiyyah travelled to them and exhorted them to maintain Allah's ordinances in defending the subjects. In his eight day sojourn in Egypt he also reached common people to help in the encounter. Thus he mobilised both the armies of Shām and that of Egypt. People took all necessary preparations for the war. Common people formed a great portion of the war force. However, the Mongols fled to Baghdad.

In 702/1303, the Mongol army reached Shāmi lands. The Muslim army confronted and swept them away. However, a month later, they draw nearer leading the armies in Hums and Hamah to leave their places and succumb to flight. As they draw near to Damascus, people got totally terrified. Ibn Taymiyyah played a major role in assuring the people that the Mongols would not cause them any harm. He kept encouraging people of the victory over the Mongols. Both the political and the religious dignitaries swore allegiance to defend the lands. Ibn Taymiyyah swore to them that this time they would defeat the Mongols.<sup>30</sup>

Then people started doubting the legality of fighting the Mongols since they purported to be Muslims. Ibn Taymiyyah stood for this claim and issued fatwas highlighting that the Mongols violated the very basic principles of Islam, and therefore their claim to be Muslims would not avail them anything. He said that they were like those who revolted against Ali and Mu'āwiyah, and thought they were more eligible for rule than them. Likewise, these blamed the Muslims for their bad deeds, while they themselves committed more heinous and blasphemous crimes. Besides, they launched offensive wars against them and their duty now is to defend themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Then he went to the army of Hamah which fled from the enemy and told them of the allegiance that was accomplished by the Muslim army, and made them also swear to do

the same. Ibn Taymiyyah as well as the rest of the scholars strengthened the morale of the Muslim warriors, and participated actively in the war.

This battle took place in a place called Shuḡhub in 702 AH.<sup>32</sup> It was a momentous and decisive one. All Muslims in Egypt and Shām united this time, and if they were defeated this time it was very likely that they would be gone for ever. By the grace of Allah, the Muslims defeated the Mongols leading them to flee to different resorts. This brought the Mamlūk-Mongol encounter to end.

### **1.1.8 The Mamlūk-Crusader Encounter**

Despite the assiduous campaigns of Baybars, the crusaders were still there in Tripoli, which was dominated by the Normans, and Acres, the capital of the Emirate of Jerusalem. Moreover, Al-Marqab Fort was in the grasp of the Hospitlar Knights, and Ṭarsūs was under the control of the Templar Knights. Under the raids of Qalawūn, these started to crumble one after the other. By the time he died the crusaders were feeble to make any revenge. Yet, the Muslims were afraid of possible European support. So they were very keen to uproot their rule as soon as possible. Qalawūn died in 689/1290 before the accomplishment of this mission. Yet he contributed a lot in diminishing their power.

Immediately after the demise of Qalawūn, his son al-Khalīl took over in the same year. He did not have to face any internal opposition. Circumstances were totally in his favour. Therefore, he immediately took recourse to crushing the remaining crusader forces. Supplies arrived to the crusaders from Europe but availed them nothing since the Muslims now are the strongest in the region. Al-Khalīl's strenuous raids culminated in the total termination of the crusader existence in the Muslim lands in the year 690/1291.<sup>33</sup>

## **1.2 The Socio-Religious Situation**

In the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah, the socio-religious conditions of those times are densely discussed. He revolted and opposed many such practices on the ground that they were anti-Islamic. In this section, an attempt is made to shed light on the way they lived along with the religious reflections and implications.

### **1.2.1 Position of the Mamlūks**

Salāḥuddīn was the uniting force and therefore the *de facto* founder of the Ayyūbid polity which encompassed Shām and Egypt. Through this unity he could counter fight the crusaders and restore Jerusalem to the fold of Islam. However, when he died, the Muslim state was plagued with disunity and violent rivalry. In their race to power gore was the normal political scene. The contending parties sought legal and illegal means to overcome the opponents. Some even orchestrated with the crusaders to help them against their foes, and the price was the Muslim lands including Jerusalem. To overweigh the other forces, they individually managed to buy, train and recruit slaves in the military system. The pressing need for support accelerated this trade and consequently the number of the slaves multiplied.

Najmuddīn Ayyūb was predominantly responsible for this boom in slave trade, or more correctly for the political empowerment of these slaves. At a particular time, he lost all supporters and thereby his dominion. Only his slaves stood by him in this juncture. He tried to avail himself of the largest number of slaves he could afford, especially after he used the Khwarizmi mercenaries and they forsook him. This placed the *Mamālīk* (Mamlūks, the title given for the slaves) a central position in the political realm. As he located their lodge near the sea, he called them *Bahri* Mamlūks.<sup>34</sup> When he died, his wife, Shajaratuddur, who was of Turkic stock, concealed his death from the people, due to their combat with the crusaders, and managed the political affairs successfully. Being a female, she was faced with an unwelcome public reaction. This warranted the invitation and appointment of his son, Torān Shah. Due to mutual hatred, he had to face death through wounds, drowning and burning. Since then the Mamlūks had monopoly on politics for centuries.

As far as the Ayyūbids are concerned, they basically established themselves as the real defenders of Islam. Now as they had proven themselves to shirk the task, they had no justification to remain at the top of the Muslim political hierarchy. Rather, their very existence became undesirable. Now the role is vacant for him who could prove himself really qualified for it, a position the Mamlūks won through their serious and assiduous planning, logistics and mobilisation. The Mamlūks could aptly unite the Muslim forces

in Egypt and Shām and other parts as well and demolished the crusader existence and Mongol danger. This position of the Mamlūks was strengthened by their first fabulous victory over the Mongol army, and destroyed the hype that the Mongols were an invincible power. The ensuing result was that the master-slave equation was reversed and the slaves became leaders.

These slaves grew within the protective care of their respective masters. Once they are bought, they were immediately allotted in special centres or camps, wherein they were provided boarding, accommodation and training and regular salaries, in total isolation from the subjects. Each sultan or amīr had his own slaves, who were exclusively under his tutelage. Besides, he provided them with teachers who were responsible for their Islamic and Arabic education, apart from the military training for which they were primarily procured. The master would come and check their diets, accommodation, etc., regularly. Stringent accountability was carried out if things were discerned to go wrong in this connection. Those under one sultan or *amīr* exchanged a sense of fellow-feeling which characterised them as a distinct community attributed to their master. Such an affinity had its bearing on the subsequent decisive stances towards various political participants and trends.

Once a slave finished this course, he was promoted to the rank of knight and granted a fief, which is exchangeable and lucrative in nature. As he rose along the military hierarchy, he was given a different but larger fief. This changing infeudation rendered inheritance an unthought-of notion.<sup>35</sup> Gradually the slaves replaced their masters.

The Mamlūk sultans followed this feudal system and bought many slaves for the same purpose and established the same feudatory relations with their slaves.

In this section it is pertinent to look into the social fabric of the Mamlūk populace, where the Mamlūks slaves/leaders and the Egyptians were located and the position of the scholars of Islam in this assortment.



### **1.2.2 The Feudal System**

This system gave the Mamlūks, who almost exclusively formed the bulk of the Muslim army, many privileges, most important of which the fiefs which were of daunting values. Despite of the decrees of re-infeudation adopted by them, the sultan and his men had the lion's share of the total acreage of land. The Egyptians had only to cultivate it and transfer the produce to the rulers. Thus it was a class-based society. In the following sections an attempt is made to draw an exact image of the classes and interrelations underpinning their co-existence.

### **1.2.3 The Sultans**

The head of state at the time of any independent polity was called sultan. The title 'king' was applied to anyone in power whether at the highest level above all governors or even the governors themselves. Hence, the head of state had the right to combine the two titles. He, moreover, could have as many as eight hundred slaves. In a lesser manner the rulers under him could have their own. Therefore, everyone had a veritably small army under him, which he prepared for any encounter wherein the swords would have the final say. To guarantee their loyalty, some Mamlūk rulers used to have his meals with them, and would be angry if any of them avoided this gathering. It was a feudatory relationship. The Mamlūks were well qualified and they knew the purpose of their existence in this strange land and were willing to come to their master's aid whenever he summoned them. The slaves belonging to one ruler used to develop a strong relation through being classmates. This relation was essential for the defence of the master and his rights even after his death. At times of the transfer of power wherein contention was heated between the sons of the deceased sultan and the other Mamlūk rulers, his slaves would fight in favour of the children even if they were minors. Yet, the nature of the Mamlūk rule did not allow inheritance.

The slaves of the sultan were situated inside Cairo. Besides having a great number of Mamlūk soldiers, their number increased when he combined the soldiers of his predecessors. However, the relationship with them was not like that with his own men. For his slaves who were nurtured under his surveillance and aegis, he gave much

preference. Furthermore, some sultans had little contact with their families. They preferred to eat with their slaves. They were not particular about the education or qualification of their free children, who were known as *awladunnās*.

#### **1.2.4 The Sultanic Mamlūks**

These were slaves bought through agent traders who were very eager to win the prizes of the sultan. Wars in the adjacent lands and at times good relations with the kingdoms which happened to be *en route* to the Mamlūk lands facilitated the process. When such slaves arrived, special training institutions were allocated for them, wherein they secured physical, military and religious training and education, with full boarding. Graduates from these institutions were conferred ranks commensurate with their abilities. When a Mamlūk reached the rank of Amir, the sultan would make a large ceremony and that knight is offered a fief, proportional to his rank. All the subjects could do was to attend a big procession in the streets of Cairo. The knight at this ceremony used to swear allegiance to his master. This fief incrementally augmented as he secured higher ranks. However, when land and its cultivation had little value, revenues of some government sectors were periodically privatised for them. Muhammad bin Qalawūn tried to annul this ‘cash infeudation’. Initially this fief was in the same place, but later it was given in different places. However, once he was promoted, he had to leave his previous fief, and receive a different one. This precluded inheritance of fief. Therefore, the idea of transfer kept revolving in the mind of the Mamlūk knight and deterred him from developing his project. This was detrimental to the general economic situation. The slave soldiers of the other rulers (*amarā'*) constituted the second class in the military, and were usually situated outside Cairo. Accordingly, privileges differed from those under the sultan.

#### **1.2.5 *Awladunnās***

The third position in the Mamlūk hierarchy was that of *awladunnās* (the children of the Mamlūk rulers). It also included the others who joined the field from the Egyptians, Turkmen and others. Their payments were at stake at times at the late Mamlūk era. *Awladunnās* were the children of the Mamlūks. They were free from any form of slavery. Most of them had no interest in the military and political participation. They were less in

degree than the previous generation, who were basically slaves. However, some of them participated and excelled in the intellectual domain, and contributed actively.<sup>36</sup> Some joined sports and some frequented religious circles. They, moreover, lived luxuriously as they were the sons of the rulers and therefore were enjoying the fiefs of their fathers.

These Mamlūks were isolated from the society, and despite the Arabic elements in the syllabus they learned, some did not speak Arabic. Therefore, a foreign language pervaded the court. They considered themselves strangers to the land as well as to the people. They lived as a military minority concerned mainly for ruling the country. Moreover, they considered themselves equal claimants to power. Whenever the post were left vacant due to the demise of the sultan many claimed it. Ultimately the matter was left to the sword to resolve. Ezzuddīn Aybak, Qutuz , Shajaruddur, and others were murdered in the race to the throne. Minors and their families were besieged and put under house arrest; and although provided all needs, they were denied rule by force. Thus it was only power that determined political matters.

The natural result was estrangement between the subjects and these Mamlūk rulers. People had seen how power, privileges and wealth were distributed. This must have left a bad impact on the minds of the subjects. All positions in the regime were the exclusive right of these outsiders and the indigenous people were denied any participation. They were not given the same chances of education and training. Yet they had no way to change the situation. The sultan was the legitimate authority deputized by the virtual caliph, who hardly played any role apart from legitimising the authority of the ruler. The sultan had all military and legal powers. But as they were led by Muslims and the scholars of Islam gave their legal and moral support, they did not revolt. As for the other rights, the vicissitudes of time had taught them that stability was a great boon. The Mamlūks rid the Muslim land of the true enemies and established relative peace. None other than them could have played that role. Therefore, most probably, such things made them content with, or at least less eager for the participation in the politics of the time. Awladunnās lived a luxurious life rendering them ineligible for politics.

### **1.2.6 The Bureaucratic Class**

These were offices occupied by learned people in the courtly, administrative, and financial and judiciary institutions. These were preponderantly occupied by the religious scholars as they formed the majority of the educated people. Therefore, they were dubbed as the 'turbaned'. This class played a major role in the consular system. The sultans used to refer to them in matter of financial and judiciary import. They provided the legal support for the sultans.

These religious scholars made far reaching contributions in their respective schools. They were very influential in the society. Their circles were the general interest. They were attended by the public. People used to attend debates between the different theological tenets. Therefore, their being with the sultans gave the sultans momentum and people saw in the Mamlūks the legitimate rulers who undertook to defend the Muslim lands. This class used to get high salaries and the endowments were under their jurisdiction. However, as it is human nature some of them used these positions to gain vested interests, and compromised their integrity. This is the reason that made some to abstain from offices, like Ibn Taymiyyah, who was even offered to be given an allowance as long as he stayed in Cairo, but he refused. This class had their own attire and were therefore distinct from the commoners.<sup>37</sup> Although history has recorded some instances of corruption in this class, this was not the general case. They remained trusted in the community.

In this bureaucratic section there were people from the non-Muslims who worked in the financial and administrative sections and who, to the indignation of the people, used to receive high salaries; and naturally by virtue of their positions, wielded some influence. The Mamlūk could not dispense with them due to their expertise. Their wealth augmented and they caused the people who had been impoverished by the heavy taxes to protest. This at times led some sultans to confiscate their properties. The Christians and the Jew worked preponderantly in medicine and as accountants. They used to wear distinctive but expensive clothes.

### **1.2.7 The Subjects**

People of all trades, apart from those mentioned above, came under this class. They were of different economic levels. However, they were equal in the eyes of the rulers. They equally had no place at the political and military systems. The feudal system left no space for them in places of influence. They had yet to undergo taxes. They used to carry the taxes levied as a result of the exigencies caused by the Mongol and crusader invasions. For example, when Qutuz determined to counterattack the Mongols, he consulted ‘Izzuddīn bin Abdul-Salām who was one of the prominent scholars of Islam and who was known for his probity and integrity. The sultan consulted him to levy some taxes on the people, so as to face the expenses of the war. The scholar told him that such taxes would be imposed only if the all that is in the national treasury is spent on the same and nothing remained in it and the rulers themselves submitted all that they had accumulated and become like the other subjects. No one should retain anything save his weapons and mount. He said that it was not fair to impose taxes on people while the Mamlūk rulers hoarded wealth.<sup>38</sup> This has two implications: the first: the influence and respect the religious scholars commanded and second the justice of Qutuz.

### **1.2.8 The Sufis**

Sufism demonstrated in austerity, rigorous worship and complete devotion for religion appeared in the third century.<sup>39</sup> Then it drifted from the way it was originated. Due to the catastrophic conditions of the Muslims at times of disintegration and vulnerability, there emerged a type of emotional religiosity strange to the spirit of Islam, which was characterised with withdrawal from active participation in life. It surfaced as religious practices mixed with the psychological defeatism which was demonstrated in the evasive and escape-oriented religious trends. This contributed to the wide spread of Sufism wherein dervishes started gaining credence as regards their alleged miracles and wonders. This phenomenal dominance was probably as a reaction to the emergence of a rationalistic version of Sufism, which was preached by Sufi philosophers who were flayed with criticism throughout history and at times of history some of them were killed (such as Al-Shahrawardī al-Maqtūl).

This trend of Sufism denounced the use of reason and clinched strongly to mythology, appeared sociologically in the form of excessive veneration of the dervishes and so called saints. They claimed many wonders to have been performed by them. Generous endowments were entailed to the shrines, lodges where they used to live and worship. Fabulous stories were invented and people exaggerated in this practice to the extent they made too many innovations around the graves. They sought the help and succour of the dead and even circumambulated around their graves. It is because of this practice that the same personality could have more than one grave dispersed in different regions. Moreover, they also invented a rigorous preceptor-seeker relationship that established the former as the only source of knowledge the seeker is recommended to depend. He should take things the former says for granted. Whatever he gave that should not be questioned. All these erroneous practices spurred the counterattack of the orthodox scholars of Islam, and created much disparity and conflict.

The excessive veneration of the graves triggered people to seek the blessings of the dead, pray them for their needs, and build luxuriously decorated large domes over their graves, hardly distinguishable from mosques.<sup>40</sup> Every shrine was given a specific day on which it was visited. This formed a weekly cycle. And as they attributed many wonders to them, they started another innovation, namely, celebrating their days. Moreover, during those celebrations morality was not preserved and therefore it was a sentimental religious gathering devoid of the spirit of faith and religiosity. The outcome was religious ceremonies lacking all meaning of true adherence to the basic teachings of Islam. It was a religious system mixed with myths and superstitions. It was basically ostensible religiosity. They introduced even dancing into the lodges that were built specially for them. This dancing seemed like a kind of worship.<sup>41</sup>

They fictitiously prospered, and ways (sufi paths) were introduced and the stringent seeker-sheikh relationship and affiliation helped in their multiplicity to the extent that some historians believe they reached thirty six. This affiliation barred the seekers from receiving knowledge from other than their respective sheiks.

Some of the Mamlūk rulers had no problem getting these people near to them. They also helped in some cases. Some of them even got people involved in witchcraft in his

entourage. They established their institutions and supported them. Outsider historians mentioned this in their discussions about the dervishes and poor ascetic Sufis, along with the grave ceremonies/celebrations.

Moreover, historians like Ibn Baṭṭūṭah mentioned some of the habits and practices that sullied the Sufis and impugned them. According to him, they used to wear strange styles of clothes, they used to shave their moustaches, eye brows and they took to singing, dances with drum beating as part of religion,<sup>42</sup> drinking wine and addiction to hashish. This hashish was attributed to them. It was called the hashish of the poor,<sup>43</sup> referring the Sufis. This is because the poverty was often associated with them.

From the point of view Ibn Taymiyyah always held this warranted much concern. Therefore, he studied the veracity of every practice claimed to be part of religion. He tested it against the main sources of Islam, and then came up with his conclusions. As he was against superstition, imitations, inactive life, etc., he had to devote much of his time in refuting these practices, even though it displeased influential people. His writing unravels some of such practices.

### **1.2.9 Religiously Unacceptable Practices**

Making many *adhāns* in the mosque yard was one of the things Ibn Taymiyyah criticises and repudiates as an innovation. He says that this is totally against the authentic traditions. He says: “those who make *adhāns* along with the muezzin their act is not supported by evidence, according to all imams. Rather. It is an innovation, condemnable on many grounds”<sup>44</sup>

There was another phenomenon that prevailed and gained credence. There were some people who would stand in the mosque and deliver stories not free from unauthentic narrations. People used to listen attentively to them. This used to take place before the sermon on Fridays. Ibn Taymiyyah says that the imams (great authorities in Islamic scholarship) unanimously reject this, and he asserts that this makes people busy with this and drives them away from the different actions preferable before the sermon. This is made worse if they do this during the sermon.<sup>45</sup>

He also talks about reciting the *Al-An'ām* chapter in one *rak'ah* in *witr* prayer in Ramadan and elsewhere. They read it in a confusing speed, and make hard for those after them to stand for such long time. Besides, he speaks of some kind of prayers such as offering one hundred *rak'āt* in Ramadan in the mosque, in which they read the last but two chapters of the Quran in a specific manner congregationally. He discards that as something innovated, except if it is done individually at home. He always speaks against things done in the mosque as established acts, whereas they are not supported by any of the scholars of Islam. By the passage of time these things would be taken as authentic traditions. Innovation mainly comes from here. He generalises by saying holding congregations for prayers with specific number of *rak'āt* is an innovation. He also speaks about a prayer that they did and called *salah qadr*, which is performed after midnight to complete the number one hundred *rak'āt*.<sup>46</sup>

He also spoke about some agnostic people who would not follow the guidance of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and does not believe in that being obligatory. Another faction of people was the Sufis who thought that those reaching some particular degree of religiosity are no longer bound by the law of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Others, moreover, believed that they could follow Christianity or Judaism, and that that did not conflict with Islam. Regarding these, Ibn Taymiyyah judges that if proofs were established for their complicity, while being aware of the Islamic rule therein, they should be killed. Surprisingly, he says that these types of people were many in his time.<sup>47</sup>

In the time of Ibn Taymiyyah there were some people who used to seek blessings from being in some places such as the Lebanon Mount and other places. He says that these were mounts and places like other places. None has any merits. They are not like Makkah and Madīnah, whose merit is ever-subsisting in them as long as they existed. He concludes with the statement that seeking blessings in this mount and its trees are ignorant acts similar to the acts of the ignorant people before the ministry time of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).<sup>48</sup>

He spoke about the Tartars that kept attacking the Muslim lands. He said that they must be fought depending on knowing their situation and knowing Allah's rule regarding



people doing what they did. He then describes them as being a people motivated to restore the dominion of Chengīz Khan. They were seen with no muezzin in their camps, they did not perform *hajj* although they were able to do so. Their army was comprised of people who either did not believe in anything or were hypocrite heretics such as the pantheists, the Rafidites, the Jahmites and the like. He says that their criterion was how well one adhered to the *Yasa* law formulated by Chengīz Khan, not to Islam. According to their criterion even a non-Muslim could be closer to their hearts than those who did not follow them in what they did. They believed that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Chengīz Khan both came from Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah also claims that the Tatar considered Chengīz Khan to be the son of God as the Christians considered Jesus. They also would follow his law blindly and mention his name when eating and drinking and venerate him more than they venerated the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They legalised killing anyone not abiding by his law. He sums his description of them by stating “all in all, all trends of heresy, hypocrisy, agnosticism, deviation and disobedience are prevalent in the Tartar army. They are the most ignorant people of matters of religion. The most audacious in transgressing the boundaries and prohibitions of Allah and had the most share of following conjecture and desires.

It is noteworthy to say that the most important proof that led him to command their fighting as disbelievers is that they did not follow the law of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and followed the legislations of Chengīz Khan. Moreover, their actions in the various Muslim lands and cities showed that they had no concern to any Muslim. They killed all indiscriminately and raped women.

Furthermore, he spoke about some people who used to travel to different lands as part of religious habits. They were called *nussāk*. They would keep roaming all their lives with ragged clothes on.

There were other habits in vogue among some people namely having long moustaches, and even deriding those who cut them. One of them asked Ibn Taymiyyah and he told him that cutting the moustache is not something to be ashamed of since the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did it.

He also talks about some women who used to wear big turbans<sup>49</sup> on their heads and judged that they were like the humps of lean camels. Another practice that he warned against was the love and reverence for the astrologists that was prevalent in his time. They used to tell people what would happen in the future. Seemingly, they used to sit in shops and people used to respect and facilitate their work. What makes us sure of the prevalence of the practice is the fact that he debated with them as he himself tells us.

It seems that some fraternity agreements wherein each one would declare to his 'brother' that "my wealth is your wealth and my children are your children are my children and your blood is my blood" and then drink his blood. Ibn Taymiyyah repudiates this practice as unanimously prohibited. Through his repudiation he unravels another graver thing. He says that this practice resembles the practice of those who make brotherhood with some women and mingle with her alone. This he says is done by some of those affiliated to Sufism.

He also denounced the Muslims' participation in *dhimmīs* festivals and quoted that some scholars in Ḥanafī and Maliki Schools regarded this as disbelief. He also talks about the feudal system prevalent at that time, and declares that such fiefs are to be exploited during the tenure in the army not to be sold or given, and quotes the unanimity of the imams in this.

The misdistribution of wealth was a rampant practice at those times as it is now. He mentions that there were some people who were extremely poor but not given from the treasury; others were given salaries more than they needed; others received money for some particular tasks, and although they assign others to do them they give them less than the money allocated for the task.

### **1.2.10 Markets**

Markets prospered due to the density of population of Cairo. Cairo was a multicultural city which acted as the receptacle of people from all nations. The wars in the East and West contributed dramatically to this density and cultural diversity. This gave rise to economic developments, manifested in the spread of markets. Historians speak of a great

number of markets. Each market was for a specific commodity. Therefore they had draperies, etc. therefor the masters of any trade or craft used to have their markets.

Besides, there were venders who would go round quarters in the cities and sell particular commodities. People, men and women selling clothes used to go round and people would allow them inside houses. Others used to have mobile kitchens pulled along the streets, selling out food items. People selling were in great number to the extent that attracted the historians of the time. They used to bring the water from the Nile, on their backs, camels, etc. There were temporary markets such as in the time of religious celebrations and during wars. In the vicinity of the battle some people would come and sell weapons, food items, etc.

These markets were supervised and checked by government personnel. The tasks of these employees varied. Some were tax collectors. A man was appointed over every trade to determine the taxes. Another post was that of the main inspector, or *muhtasib*. His post was considered one of the very important posts. This inspector was socially extremely respected. He used to check the prices and health conditions of goods. He was responsible for cases of fraud, thefts, reductions in weighing and measurements, rotten foods. Illegal cases were punished and goods were dispensed with. On the other hand, if this inspector does not do his job properly then people inflicted all insults on him, especially in regards to the prices.

Women at those times would every now and then go shopping and would jest with the shopkeepers. Couples sometimes came together for shopping then the husband would leave her to buy her needs and go away. Women usually used to buy clothes for their husbands. They used to form the bulk of shoppers, especially at ceremonies. Such ceremonies made it imperative for woman to frequent the markets. Any deterrent action from the husband against this would cause serious repercussions in the matrimonial relations. Therefore, there was unbearable crowded.

Furthermore, ceremonies boosted the markets. For example, in Ramadan, in celebrating *tarāwīh* (supererogatory prayers at nights of Ramadan), and even at Christian festivals, wax lights markets boomed. A great amount of them were bought. They were of different

sizes; some of them were pulled on carts. This reflected the economical level of the people of the time. Moreover, harlots, historians account, used to stay until late during night time in the markets, wearing distinctive attire.

Another function characterised the market of that time was that the market was a place of exchanging news. It functioned as the media today. People used to talk and discuss different issues, and the authorities would make its formal announcements there. These markets multiplied in the early Mamlūk time but curtailed in later times wherein the famines and plagues as well as the maladministration and riots sounded the knell for this prosperity.

Historians also spoke about the coins at those times. They were made of silver. The proportion of silver in the currency was almost seventy per cent of its total weight. As the state started to decline at the time of the Jerkis Mamlūks, silver was gradually supplanted with copper. Even this base metal was cheated and adulterated with lesser metals. This gradually undermined the trust in this currency. This forgery nurtured a wave of economic decline. It sometimes led the authorities to remint a different currency. This, for example, was part of the reformatory procedures to check the monetary corruption Muhammad bin Qalawūn introduced after his return from Karak to rule for the third time. At other times strict penal measures were applied to deter forgery and adulteration, or to force people to recognise and deal in the new currency. All in all, the previous accounts tell us that the Qalawūn era reached the acme of economic prosperity. But the whole situation changed dramatically after him and turned into irredeemable decline and as a result the markets curtailed due to the decline in consumption; and commodities became at premium.

### **1.2.11 The Minorities**

Multiculturalism was one of the important features of the Mamlūk era. The crises and natural disasters provided the momentum for the growth of non-Arab population. Immigrations of the people in east and west played a vital role for this diversity. People from the adjacent empires flooded into the Mamlūk Egypt for safety and created a heterogeneous society wherein there was mutual influence that was so strong that it

transcended religions and overcame the inter-religious particularism among the commoners.

Among the non-Muslims who lived among the Muslims were the Jews and Christians. For the Jews, three denominations existed in Egypt: the Samaritan Judaism, the Rabbinic Judaism<sup>50</sup> and the Karaite Judaism<sup>51</sup>. The Jews were smaller in number. For the Christians two denominations existed: the Jacobites (monophysites) and the Melkites.<sup>52</sup>

Each one of such denominations had their own patriarch, who was their representative in front of the formal authorities. He also enjoyed high formal prestige.<sup>53</sup> The Jews were smaller in number but the Christians constituted a large portion of the whole population. This can be affirmed with reference to the number of churches they had. The Arab historian, Al-Maqrīzī counted as many as eighty two churches for the Jacobites alone.<sup>54</sup>

Like the Muslims, they were bound by the national law, participated in the general receptions of the arriving high ranking politicians, like the caliph, the sultan, etc., and participated in the communal national duties physically and financially, such as digging channels and building the bridges, etc.

The Coptic Christians were originally farmers and as Omar, (the second caliph) conquered it by compromise, the lands under the Coptic citizens remained under their control and they had to pay produce taxes. The rest of the non-Muslims had other occupations like the financial and commercial sectors.

According to the historical accounts about that period, they practised their rituals and ceremonies freely, and whatever sporadically stringent rules they had to follow, they indulged in the same social life as the Egyptians. The People of the Book were an inseparable part of the Egyptian society and therefore they participated in the general Egyptian social activities and shared with the Egyptians the same social economic intellectual and political conditions, and they had to influence and get influenced by the society they lived in.

For example, in times of drought (as happened in 775 and 854 AH) they along with the Muslim leaders, commoners and scholars used to go out in the open lands praying Allah for rain.<sup>55</sup>

On the different Christian festivals, the streets and markets in Cairo enshrined celebrative manifestations gathering all inhabitants irrespective of religion and race. The markets boomed on festivals which seemed to have been shared by all. The books authored by Muslim scholars in this connection are indicative of this phenomenon. For example, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote his book *Iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* to clarify what is the correct attitude a Muslim should have towards the festivals of the other religions. This is believed to be necessitated by the social practices prevalent at those days.

However, they used to be skirmishes between the Muslims and the Christians and at other times the Christians tried to disturb the stability of the cities by setting fire to them. Great areas were burned. At those times the Muslims exceeded the limits in revenge.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, it was clear that during the pre-Ghaza battle between the Muslims and the Mongols, the Christians in Shām seized the opportunity and humiliated the Muslims so much so that they throw wine on the passer-byes and destroyed the mosques. Thus they rejoiced at this apocalyptic attack against the Muslims. After the conflict was resolved to the advantage of the Muslims, they retaliated against the Christians. This kindled some animosities between the two groups.

Moreover, one should distinguish between the crusader-Muslim and the Muslim- Arab Christian relationships. Whereas the relationship with the crusaders in their respective emirates was hostile and never ceased to be so, the relationship with the Arab Christians inside the Muslim rule was much better to the extent that they held prestigious offices in the Mamlūk regime. Moreover, even during treaties between the Muslims and the crusaders, attacks were easily sparked, and such treaties were summarily violated. The treaties were just bridges to attacks. Supplies did not cease to come to the crusader lands from Europe and the Muslims used to have treaties to make surprise attacks as time allowed. This featured the relations existed those days.

The Christians leaving their continent to settle in and occupy a vast acreage of Muslim lands was not an easy issue for the Muslims to condone. They could not bear it and remained all time harbouring the restoration of Muslim lands.<sup>57</sup> They also suffered another blow at the hands of the Mongols. But the Mongols represented a military threat, which was milder than the intellectual and military threat represented by the Christians.

The incessant harassments of the Christians for the Muslim traders in the Mediterranean provoked and intensified animosities between the two parties, leading Baybars to prepare for attacking Cyprus. He prepared seventeen ships and sent them to Cyprus but the weather was not in their favour. Some ships capsized and the whole campaign proved to be a great loss for the Muslims. Yet for the Muslims it was not a defeat. It was merely an act of God. Only defeat by the sword of the enemies was disgracing. All these incidents led to many reactions between the two religions.

Therefore, debates and attacks and sending letters such as the one received by Ibn Taymiyyah could not be sent just for the sake of debate. It was intellectual invasion. And it must have been understood as such by the Muslims who were very particular and enthusiastic to respond to them. There are two factors that lead us to this conclusion. One is the number of responses the Muslim scholars did and the second is the nature of response. Many scholars of Islam wrote detailed books in repudiation of the claims propounded by the Christians. Some scholars translated the indignation through the harsh language they used. And although Ibn Taymiyyah was calm in his response he seemed to be addressing the Muslims and correcting their theology in dealing with the Christian allegations. This is an indication of his being too keen that the Muslims should not be misled by the Christian falsifications.

### **1.3 The Intellectual Situation**

In the thirteenth century, and before the Mongol invasion, Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic caliphate. Therefore, it was the most important city, both politically and scientifically. As stability was the prerequisite of any scientific advancement stable places especially the metropolitan cities (in modern expression), were the locus of all intellectual and scientific movements. These characteristics were manifest in Baghdad. Consequently

it witnessed great important strides in all sciences. It had the greatest library on earth, and the House of Wisdom, which was erected by Harun al-Rashīd. These unique facilities made it the haven of the scholars from all over the world. People with diverse interests found it the ideal place for their projects whether commercial or scientific.

However, this prosperity was terminated at the hands of the eastern barbarian people who had no concern for knowledge and civilisation. Rather, they were the most savage, inhuman and uncouth people in the world. These were the Mongols, under the leadership of Genghis Khan. They had been unnoticeable nation in the east and then constructed the vastest empire humanity had ever known. Through some historic factors, they developed an ineluctable urge for devastating civilisations and looting properties. They swept over the eastern lands, perpetrating the most heinous and inhuman crimes through their big scale killings, massive destruction and arsons, carnages, etc., and reached Baghdad to repeat the same in this city, which was once the haven for science and scientists from all civilised world. In this assault, big politicians and scholars were the main target of these hosts. Many of them were beheaded before the caliph, who, as some historians reported, met a more disgracing fate, where he was made to lie and be trodden by the horses until he breathed his last under their hooves.

This led to a massive migration. The ideal substitutes were the second most developed cities, namely Damascus and Cairo. Moreover, among the most important places for Islamic knowledge was Palestine, which had its importance because of the holy land-Jerusalem. But this had to face a similar fate as Baghdad at the hands of the Crusaders who killed people *en masse*, and caused great deportations. The scholars along with many who could escape the Christian swords left these cities and fled to Damascus and Cairo.

To give but a few examples, the family of Qudāmah, who were later known as the al-Maqdisi, left his domestic land (Palestine) and travelled to Damascus. Many Maqdisis were notable Muslim scholars in the field of Islamic jurisprudence. Similarly, the family of Ibn Taymiyyah left Ḥarran and settled in Damascus. Damascus had special gravity for peaceful settlement. It contained plenty of water, to the extent that every house had a fountain, which, apart from being one of the essential elements of life, added to the beauty of the houses, which contained beautiful mosaic images and wall dressings. In this



city, many trades and artefacts prevailed at that time. This is more obvious when we read about the European travelogues, and how they praised the different industrial products which they were very keen to buy as things unavailable in their own lands, including swords, clothes, carpets, etc.

However, the turbulences that took place in Damascus especially at the time of the Mongol raids and at the interim periods until a strong ruler took over and settle the dispute and contention, again affected the demographical distribution. Scholars would choose to live in a learning-friendly environment, where educational facilities and amenities abounded. Therefore they sought quieter places. At many times whenever news came portending the arrival of Mongol troops many people tried to leave the city and seek to live in other places. However, there were scholars who remained in the city such as Ibn Taymiyyah. He never fled the combat. His visits to Cairo were for political reasons or where he had to be put behind the bars as a punishment for his intellectual revolution against the customary erroneous elements in the Muslim society and intelligentsia.

### **1.3.1 The Islamic Schools**

The schools of those times seemed to be highly concerned with education. The scholars appointed as teachers were highly qualified. As per our standards of today they were far more qualified and the syllabi were far more advanced than many of the universities and the teachers nowadays.

Besides the mosques, the Islamic schools played a central role in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Whereas mosques provided the spiritual enrichment which was nurtured through memorisation of the Quran and listening to the regular exhortations in the form of sermons and lectures, the schools were the institutions that embraced specialised education which was run under the auspices and sponsorship of the state. This type of formal and free education was basically initiated by Nizām-ul-Mulk in the fifth century, where he established schools in Khurāsān and Persia then in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul.

The Ayyūbids were very particular in this regard. They established schools to obliterate the intrusive esoteric thought of the Fatimids/Nusairids who tried to force it on people.

The Mamlūk continued to sponsor education and even initiated many endowments for this purpose. Some of such schools are<sup>58</sup>:

- The ‘Ādilī Major School, after the name of the founder Al-‘Ādil
- The Zāhirī School in Shām, after the name of Baybars (Al-Zāhir)
- The Ṣālihī School
- The Kāmilī School
- The Sukkarī School
- The Omarī School

And many more existed. Some of these schools were multi-disciplinary, whereas others were exclusively for *ḥadīth*, Islamic jurisprudence or Arabic linguistics and literature. Some schools specialised in specific schools of thought/law. Some were teaching the *Ḥanbali* thought while others were teaching scholasticism or *kalām*. Moreover, in Iraq and Persia Schools were exclusively for astronomy, mathematics, philosophy or logic.

This period produced many great scholars in different religious sciences as well as natural disciplines. Some are as follows:

- ‘Ezzuddīn bin Abdul-Salām (d. 660 AH)
- Abu Shāmah, the historian (d. 665 AH)
- Ibn Al-‘Adīm, the historian and *ḥadīth* specialist (d. 666 AH)
- Naṣiruddīn Ṭūsī, the great philosopher and astronomer (d. 672 AH)
- Imam Nawawī (d. 676 AH)
- Ibn Khallikān, the qāḍi and historian (d. 681 AH)
- Shihābuddīn Al-Qurāfī, the juristic theorist (d. 682 AH)
- Ibn Al-Nafīs, the physician who discovered the blood circulation system (d. 687 AH)
- Ibn Daqīq Al-‘Īd, the chief Qāḍi (d. 702 AH)
- Imam Sharafuddīn Ibn Qudāmah, jurist and *ḥadīth* specialist (d. 687 AH)
- Ibn ‘Aṭā’ullah Al-Isakandarī (d. 709 AH), authored the ‘Aṭā’ī wisdoms (*al-Ḥikam Al-‘Aṭā’iyyah*)

- Abul-Hajjāj Al-Mizzī (d. 742 AH), the great encyclopaedic *ḥadīth* specialist and memoriser
- Abu Ḥayyān Al-Andalusī, the commentator of the Quran and great Arabic grammarian (d.745 AH)
- Ibn Al-Wardī, the linguist and grammarian in Arabic (d. 749 AH)
- Ibn Hishām, the father of linguistics (d. 761 AH)
- Ibn Taymiyyah and his students

### **1.3.2 The Populist Religious Thought**

In this era, two antagonist religious trends existed: Sunnis and Shia. The Shia prospered at the time of the Buwayhids and Fatimids who were also called the Ubaidis. However, Ṣalāḥuddīn could restore the previous situation and caused their thought and state to wane. The majority of people followed *Sunnah* and venerated the *Ṣaḥabah*. These were preponderantly either Asharites or *ahl al-ḥadīth* in theology. In terms of the schools of law the four schools co-existed. The Ayyūbids advocated the Shafī‘ī School and Sufism prospered under their aegis. In theology they patronised the Asharite thought. Ayyūbids’ favour for these thoughts conducted to their dissemination in that epoch of history. Asharites preferred to deal with matters of ‘*aqīdah*’ rationally, to the minimisation of scriptural evidence. *Ahl al-ḥadīth* derived these issues from texts not through rational speculation. This provoked many debatable issues between the two orientations. Here conflict surfaced on the intellectual ground. Abu al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī. The founder of Asharite School of thought was initially a Mu‘tazilite for forty years. He therefore mastered and also got influenced by their rationalistic reading of scripture. Then realising their faulty approach in proving ‘*aqīdah*’ matters he reverted to establishing his own school. This school was still hovering over rationalism in ‘*aqīdah*’. However in his book *Al-Ibānah*, which was among his last books, he declared that he upheld the view of Ahmad bin Ḥanbal. In this book he stated that he adhered to what Ahmad bin Ḥanbal used to say and believe, and that he opposed everything that Ahmad bin Ḥanbal opposed.<sup>59</sup> His followers continued his previous thought and even differed among themselves in some issues. They contributed a lot to the theorisation and preaching of his thought. The Ayyūbid rulers adopted it as being the best way to follow.

However, unlike the Ayyūbids, who supported the Shafi‘ī School, Baybars during his reign, in the year 663 AH, appointed a chief qāḍi from every school to judge his community according to their respective schools. This vitiated the power of Shafi‘ī thought, allowing its counterparts to have almost equal chances.

The Mamlūk era witnessed an intellectual particularism and conflict. People adhered blindly to their respective schools. Therefore it is believed that the appointment of the four Qāḍis was thought to be expedient due to this bigotry. Moreover, this bigotry infiltrated the ranks of the scholars, and, as a result, they fell prey to partial rationalisation of their juristic decisions. This contributed to a vast literature confined within the boundaries of the four schools. The contemporary scholars struggled relentlessly to produce encyclopaedic works commenting, elucidating, elaborating, editing and authenticating the previous literature. Ultimately, this led to a common assumption that the door of *ijtihād* was closed and that the later generations would not add anything to what the earlier giants did. This assumption gained credence, and *ijtihād* was considered as unnecessary and unapproachable. Any opinion not sanctioned by the opinions of the four imams is immediately rejected. Therefore, when Ibn Taymiyyah made his own efforts depending on the texts and the pressing need for deciding on new emerging issues, once his opinions were not supported by the opinions of the four imams, although they were supported by many of the opinions of the *salaf*, a sever campaign was (and still is) launched against him. Being a Ḥanbali did not make him cling to the dictations of his school. Rather, he studied matters with view to finding solutions from the Quran and *sunnah* and the opinions of the Muslim scholars. Although he did not follow the four schools in some issues, his opinions were mostly supported by texts and opinions of the previous scholars.<sup>60</sup>

Thus Ibn Taymiyyah was the pioneer to open the door of *ijtihād* and his opinions are still alive even now. He amply fulfilled the conditions of independent research and arrived therefore at valid and tenable judgements. His students also followed in his footsteps. Any opinion and statement was negotiable for him except for those made by the Prophet. However, being a human being he could have made mistakes, like anyone, but that does not doubt his unimpeachable probity in his exertion and investigation.

He made the same efforts in issues related to theology. People in his time were preponderantly followers of Asharite School of thought, especially after it has been standardised by Ṣalāḥuddīn to be the only one taught at al-Azhar. Ibn Taymiyyah was such an open minded scholar that he, unlike many of his contemporaries, was more aware of the underlying principles of the different theological schools than their adherents, and was able to decide what is right and what is wrong based on comparative study and investigation.

Another factor that conduced to igniting public opinion against him was his discussions and expositions about some of the Sufi practices and trends that were taken for granted and won the support of some Mamlūk rulers. He differentiated between many actions and sections of Sufis. He talked about them differently based on his knowledge about each. He divulged the secrets of some of those who affiliated themselves to Sufism but went wrong in their religious practices.<sup>61</sup>

In the preceding paragraphs, an attempt has been made to elaborate on the political, social and intellectual background wherein Ibn Taymiyyah lived and with which he had to interact. The tumults spurred by the collective attacks and the ensuing aftermaths besides the long accumulated intellectual residues as a result of the intrusion of philosophy and speculative scholasticism into religious matters moulded his thoughts, sharpened his wit and directed his responses. This partially formed a forceful motive for his intellectual production. Furthermore, the erroneous approaches adopted in intellectual investigation and the social praxis that was sullied by destructive inter-civilizational contact triggered him to counteract through his various struggles.

It is, moreover, pertinent to have a panoramic biographical account of Ibn Taymiyyah to consolidate the earlier chapter in drawing a clear picture of his personality. Here the elaboration on his education, debates, legacy, trials and death are means that serve this purpose.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> See Ibn Taymiyyah's *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, edited by Anwar al-Bāz and 'Āmir al-Jazzār, Dar al- Wafā' 2005, vol. 28 pp. 542-4. He, while affirming the fact that the Mamlūks during his time were the only able to defend Islam, tells us that Yemen was too weak or lenient to do anything in this regard. For Hejaz, he characterised it as having drifted from the guidance of sharia, developed many innovations and were astray; and the pious people there were too vulnerable to do anything for rectifying the situation and the rāfḍah (extremist Shia who charge *the* companions of the prophet with blasphemy) were prevalent in the territory. Moreover, people in North Africa were led by the Bedouin people whom he described as the worst of humankind. For Moroccans, he said they forsook jihad although their land had been taken by the Christians.

<sup>2</sup> For the Christian atrocities see Amin Maalouf: *The Crusaders Through The Arab Eyes*, translated by Jon Rothschild, first published by Al-Saqi Books, London, 1984

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Al-Athīr, Ali Bin Muhammad: *Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tarīkh*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), edited by Abdul-Karīm Al-Qāḍi, Darul-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1415 AH vol. 9, p. 19

<sup>4</sup> *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1998, edited by Edward Peters, p. 91

<sup>5</sup> See Chronicle of the First Crusade, M.E. McGinty, trans., 1941

<sup>6</sup> *Op cit.* p. 80

<sup>7</sup> This practice was not a new thing in the politics of Mamlūk rulers. This practice had already started by the Abbasid caliphs, and was followed by the Ayyūbids, who bought the Mamlūk slaves and through them they came to power, and established their polity.

<sup>8</sup> This secured for them Islamic upbringing. However, in the reign of Faraj Bin Barqūq and thereafter this was not the case. The slaves brought were adults who demonstrated a very immoral conduct. See Al-Maqrīzī, Abu Al-Abbās Taḳiyyuddīn. *Al-Mawā'ez wa al-I'tibār bi Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ Wa al-Āthār*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut 1418 AH,

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* vol. 3, pp. 373-4

<sup>10</sup> The *Bahri Mamlūk* was the name initially given by Najmuddīn Ayyūb to the slaves he bought to be his support for gaining power. This name continued to be applied to the first of the two Mamlūk phases of rule. *Bahri* means related to the sea, as he allotted his slaves in a place by the sea.

<sup>11</sup> Qāssim Abduh Qāssim *Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk, al-Tarīkh al-siyāsi wa al- ijtimā'ī*, Ein For Human And Social Studies, Cairo, 1998, p. 26

<sup>12</sup> *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1998, edited by Edward Peters, p. 84

<sup>13</sup> Amin Maloof: *The Crusaders Through The Arab Eyes*, translated by Jon Rothschild, (Al-Sadiq Books, London 1984), p. 38

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Taghri Bardi, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, Dār al-Kutub, Egypt, vol.5 , p. 150

<sup>15</sup> Mar'ī Farsat, "Al-Taḥāluf Al-Maghūlī Al-Naṣrānī", Majallat Al- Albayan, Issue No. 300, p. 79-82

<sup>16</sup> For the situation of the whole Muslim world during this debacle and how the Mamlūks were the *de facto* defenders of Islam, see Ibn Taymiyyah's *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, edited by Anwar al-Bāz and 'Āmir al-Jazzār, Dārul- Wafā' 2005, vol. 28 pp. 542-4

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit, vol. 6, p. 238

<sup>18</sup> Najmuddīn was a man of virtue and righteousness, generous and chivalric who demonstrated great respect for religious scholars. See Al-'Aynī, Badruddīn: *'Aqd al-Jumān* edited by Mahmoud Rizq Mahmoud, Dārul-Kutub wa al- Wathā'iq Al- Qawmiyyah, Cairo, 2010, p. 129

<sup>19</sup> Al-Maqrīzī considered her to be the first Mamlūk ruler as she was a Turk or Armenian slave woman. She was described by some historians as highly fastidious, intensely jealous; excessively chivalric ...intoxicated with vanity and conceit.

<sup>20</sup> Al-'Aynī, Badruddīn: *'Aqd al-Jumān* edited by Mahmoud Rizq Mahmoud, Dārul-Kutub Wa Al- Wathā'iq Al- Qawmiyyah, Cairo, 2010, p. 5

<sup>21</sup> Sharif, M M: History Of Muslim Philosophy, ALEGUER Heimatverlag GmbH, Kempton Germany, 1966 volume 2, p. 789

<sup>22</sup> Dhahabī, Shamsuddīn, *Tārīkh Al-Islām*, (Dār Al-Kitāb Al-'Arabi, Beirut, 1987), first edition, edited by Omar Abdul-Salām Tadmurī, vol. 44 pp. 42-3

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in his letter to the king Al-Nāṣir that the Mongol invasion was a sign of Allah's mercy for the Muslim nation. He said that this problem was a test for the Muslims to bring them back to Allah and have their sins absolved. This apocalyptic problem, he said, led to the unity of the Muslims under the banner of one ruler. See his *Risālatun ila Al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, (published as part of *Jame' Al-Rasā'el* Regarding the Tatars, edited by Muhammad Azīz Shams, Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, Makkah, 1424 AH vol. 5, p. 297

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, edited by Ali Shīrī, Dār Iḥya' Al-Turāth Al-'Arabi, 1988, vol.13 p. 254

<sup>25</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, Ahmad bin Ali, Al-Sulūk li Ma'rifat Duwal Al-Mulūk, edited by Abdul-Qādir Aṭa, (Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1997), Vo. 1, p. 138

<sup>26</sup> Abu Al-Fida' 'Imāduddīn Ismāil, *al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbār al-Bashar*, al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusainiyyah al-Miṣriyyah, vol. 4, p. 10

<sup>27</sup> Al-Dhahabī, Shamsuddīn *Tarīkh Al-Islam*, edited by Omar Abdul-Salām Tadmurī, Dār Al-Kitāb Al-'Arabi, Beirut, 1987, vol. 52 p. 75

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, edited by Ali Shīrī Dār Iḥya' Al-Turāth Al-'Arabi, 1988, vol.13 pp. 10-11

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p.28

<sup>31</sup> See this *fatwa* in Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, King Fahd Complex, Madīnah, KSA edited by Abdul-Raḥmān Bin Muhammad Qāssim vol.28, p.509

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* p. 29

<sup>33</sup> Mujīruddīn Al-‘Alīmī, *al-Uns al-Jalīl bi Tarīkh al-Quds wa al-Khalīl*, edited by Adnān Yūnus, (Maktabat Dindīs, Amman, Jordan, 1420), vol. 2p. 89

<sup>34</sup> Al- Maqrīzī, Ahmad bin Ali, *Al-Sulūk li ma‘rifat Duwal Al-Mulūk*, edited by Abdul-Qādir Aṭa, (Dar Al-Kutub Al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1997), vol. 1, p. 441

<sup>35</sup> But we have to remember that Nūruddīn Mahmūd Zinkī used to let the children of the diseased inherit the fiefs of their fathers. See Al- Maqrīzī *Al-Mawā‘iz wa al-I‘tibār Bi Dhikr Al-Khiṭaṭ wa Al-Āthār* Dār Al-Kutub Al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1418/1997, vol. 3, p. 377

<sup>36</sup> Sārimuddīn bin Daqqāq, Ibn Taghrī Bardī and Ibn Eyas are a few examples.

<sup>37</sup> Al- Maqrīzī in his *Mawā‘iz* mentions three types of attire: that of what he calls the sword masters, that of the pen masters and that of the religious scholars. Vol. 3, Pp 395-7

<sup>38</sup> Al-Dhahabi, *Tarīkh Al-Islām*, Dār Al-Kitāb Al-‘Arabi, Beirut, 1987, vol. 48, p.45

<sup>39</sup> Al-Mawā‘iz, *op cit*, vol. 4 p. 281

<sup>40</sup> See for example, the very beginning of *Rihlat Bin Jubair*. He and Ibn Baṭṭūtah dwelled long on the description of decorations and skilful architecture of graves and the practices done round them.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Qazwīnī, Zakariyya bin Muhammad, *Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-Ibād*, <http://www.alwarraq.com>, p. 115. Almost all historians and geographers have mentioned this in their books.

<sup>42</sup> In *Mawā‘iz*, *op cit* vol. 4, p. 281, the author quotes a poet describing the Sufis of his time. He mentions dancing, drinking, sexuality, unity and indwelling and singing as the characteristics of the Sufis of his time.

<sup>43</sup> *Al-Sulūk op cit*, vol. 3, p. 226

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Fatāwā Al-Kubrā*, edited by Muhammad Abdulqādir Aṭa and Mustāfa Abdulqādir Aṭa, Darul-kutub Al-‘Ilmiyyah 1987 vol. 5, p. 324

<sup>45</sup> Al-Ba‘lī, Badruddīn Muhammad bin Ali, Abridged Version of Ibn Taymiyyah’s *Al-Fatāwā Al-Miṣriyyah*, edited by Muhammad Ḥāmid Al-Faqī, Dār Ibn Al-Qayyim, Dammam, KSA, 1986, p. 40

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid* p. 81

<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p. 411

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* pp. 599-600

<sup>49</sup> Also mentioned in *Al-Sulūk*, *op cit*, vol.2, p. 3

<sup>50</sup> “Rabbinic Judaism is based on the belief that at Mount Sinai, Moses received from God the Written Torah (Pentateuch) in addition to an oral explanation, known as the "Oral Torah," that Moses transmitted to the people,” as quoted in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic\\_Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic_Judaism), retrieved on 14-2-2015.

<sup>51</sup> The definition of this sect as given in Wikipedia ([http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karaite\\_Judaism](http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karaite_Judaism), retrieved on 14-2-2015) is thus: “Karaite Judaism is a kind of Judaism that accepts only the Hebrew Bible as authoritative, and rejects the Mishnah and Talmud, which are explanations of the Bible by rabbis in the first few centuries of the Common Era”.



<sup>52</sup> Qāssim Abduh Qāssim *Aṣr Salāḥīn al-Mamālīk, al-Tarīkh al-siyāsī wa al-ijtimā'ī*, Ein For Human And Social Studies, Cairo, 1998, p. 254

<sup>53</sup> Al-Qalqashandī in his *Subḥ Al-A 'Sha*, elaborated on their denominations, beliefs and hierarchy.

<sup>54</sup> *op cit* p. 257

<sup>55</sup> Bin Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Nujūm Al-Zāhirah*, annotated by Muhammad Husain Shamsuddīn, Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1992, vol. 15 p. 170

<sup>56</sup> See for example, *Mawā'iz*, vol.3, p.15

<sup>57</sup> Settlement has been a stable ideological policy of the West. They shed a lot of blood to occupy the Muslim lands and kill the indigenous inhabitants. Now they have submitted this land to the Jews and kept supporting them in all grounds. However, this time it is not only the indigenous inhabitants who suffer. Rather, all those of power or those who form the slightest threat to Israel have to suffer carnages, invasion and destruction under untenable arguments. After everything is clear, they adduce *ex post facto* rationalizations.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Nu'aimī, Abdulqādir Muhammad (d. 927 AH) wrote a book in which he enumerated and discussed the different schools established in the Muslim lands. This book is entitled *Al-Dāris Fi Tārīkh Al-Madāris*, published in 1990 by Dārul-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Ash'arī, *Al-Ibānah 'An Usūl Al-Diyānah*, Dār al-Ansār, Cairo, 1397 AH, p. 20

<sup>60</sup> Burhānuddīn, the son of Ibn Qayyim authored a book in which he studied the matters in which Ibn Taymiyyah deviated from the four schools and proved that in no matter whatsoever was he alone in the opinions he upheld. This book is entitled *Al-Masā'il Al-Fiqhiyyah Min Ikhtiyārāt Sheikh Al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah*. It was published in 2007 by both Dār Ibn 'Affān and Dār Ibn Al-Qayyim.

<sup>61</sup> In the next chapter, you will read about his interaction and his opinions on some of them.



# CHAPTER TWO

*Life, Education and Books*

*of*

*Shaykhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah*



## **2 . EDUCATION, LIFE AND BOOKS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH**

The life, age and works of Ibn Taymiyyah have been one of the greatest attractions of writers of diverse origins and interests. He has been the object of investigation and study of different writers in different languages throughout history. Each researcher had looked at the subject from a different angle. Some dealt with his life; some others looked at his juristic opinions on different matters; others, however, looked into his polemics and debates; others, yet, had dealt with his philosophical and logical contributions. Some studied his reformist and educational efforts in society. Other researches concentrated on his propagation, *jihad* or defense of Islam against attacks from within and without. On other occasions, his thought in general is studied. Some reached a conclusion in his favor; others favored to be in the other side. Almost all his life and career are sufficiently covered by the researches carried out by Muslims and non-Muslims. Throughout eight centuries, researches and books have been authored covering a broad spectrum of his legacy. Bakr Abu Zaid stated that traditional religious scholars from the four schools wrote on him, mostly from the Shafi'ī School, where as many as twenty eight had written on him<sup>1</sup>. He was included in the classified biographical compendia (*tarājim*) in the category of the jurists, in the category of the *ḥadīth* specialists and in that of the exegetes. Ten of his contemporaries who missed to meet him wrote independent biographies. Some wrote even more than one biography about him, some two and some three.

Contemporarily, attempts have been made to write a historiographical account of the studies conducted so far about him. For example, Dr. Salahuddīn al-Munajjid in his book *Shaikhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, Siratuhū Wa Akhbaruh ind al-Mu'arrikhīn* (Ibn Taymiyyah's Biography And News In The Historians' View) enumerated as many as seventeen biographies arranged chronologically. Another compendium is *al-Jame' Lisīrat Ibn Taymiyyah* written by Muhammad Azīz Shams and Ali bin Muhammad al-'Amrān in which they collected the traditional biographies whether written as separate books or as independent chapters, traversing the time span between the eight century to the thirteen century AH, counting seventy five. Despite the long span, it is limited to those biographies penned down in Arabic. However, an exhaustive account

of the studies conducted on him would possibly run to hundreds. Alā'uddīn Al-Raḥḥāl in his *Ma'ālim Al-Ijtihād* p. 43 in 2002 mentioned that Al-Faryo'ī reported that ninety six separate works, one hundred and two biographical studies included with other biographies and twenty orientalist studies have been conducted on Ibn Taymiyyah. It follows from the above that the personality and thought of Ibn Taymiyyah have been throughout the ages a central theme that many have opted to study. This testifies to his being a genius of rare existence.

## **2.1 BIRTH**

Authentic material sources of all ages are unanimous that Ibn Taymiyyah<sup>2</sup> Taqiuddīn Abul-'Abbās Ahmad, son of Shihābuddīn Abdul-Ḥalīm, son of Majduddīn Abul-Barakāt Abdul-Salām, son of Abdullah Abul-Qāsim Al-Ḥarrānī was born on Monday 10 Rabī' al-Awwal 661 AH, which corresponds to 22 January 1263 CE. He was born into a devoutly religious family famous for its scholarly pursuit. His father and grandfather were both highly esteemed scholars of the age. His father was a mufti and professor, and his grandfather had even assumed higher ranks in many fields of knowledge and Islamic jurisprudence, in particular.<sup>3</sup> He is credited with authoring the book of the legal rulings entitled *Al-Muntaqa*, which has been taught until the present day in the Arab world, and maybe elsewhere too. His mother is Sittul-Ni'am, daughter of Abdul-Raḥmān, son of Ali al-Ḥarrāniyyah, who had nine sons but no daughter.

Ibn Taymiyyah was accorded the title *Shaykhul-Islām* by many of his contemporaries and it is used since then down to the present day. This provoked his hate mongers into excessive aversion and rage that reached the extent of charging with disbelief anyone calling him so. Despite the absence of threat, Ibn Nasiruddīn (d. 842 AH)<sup>4</sup> explained the graveness of the prejudiced charge in his independent book written solely for this purpose, entitled *al-Radd al-Wāfir*, and quoted around ninety scholars who willingly used the title in their writings.

## **2.2 Education and Academic Qualities**

As Harran was threatened with the approach of the Mongols, the family of scholars had to venture a very hard journey for the safety of their lives. They were carrying the scientific wealth (i.e. books) which was the dearest ever to their hearts and which

could otherwise be in danger should the Mongols lay hand on them. They used pulling beasts for the transport of the load, which soon in the middle of the route fatigued them, forcing the caravan into a halt. The pious scholars raised hands, supplicated, and miraculously overcame the obstacle course.<sup>5</sup> They could barely escape the danger of such risky migration to Damascus, which assumed a high position at those times paralleled only by Cairo as the two havens of scholars of that caliber. At that very time (i.e., in 667), Ibn Taymiyyah was hardly seven years of age. He started his education in Damascus.

Since his early life, all academic credentials and scholarly qualities manifested themselves clearly in him. He possessed a highly retentive memory, sharp wits, quick improvisation, a fluent tongue and an invincible urge for seeking knowledge. He obtained fame in an early age by virtue of the rare characteristics he demonstrated. One of the scholars from Aleppo visited Damascus. He came to a tailor near the madrasa where Ibn Taymiyyah studied; asking him about a boy whose name was Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah, mentioning that he heard that he had a fast memory. The tailor pointed to the street leading to his school, which Ibn Taymiyyah frequented every day. The man waited the child to pass by. After a while, he turned up with a wide board in hand. The man dictated to him twelve or thirteen *aḥādīth* with their chains of narrators, asked him to read that once, took the board immediately and asked him to recite that. The child proceeded reciting all that was written in continuous flow. He commanded him to clean that and wrote another set of selective *aḥādīth* and ordered to rehearse in the previous manner. Every time, the child stood up the challenge confidently. The old man prophesied that that child would be a force to be reckoned with, as what he witnessed was rare to happen.

Furthermore, he, as described by Al-Dhahabī, started his life with complete purity, continence and chastity along with complete devotion to worship and religious service. He used to attend the madrasas and religious circles, debates, and convince the listeners at an early age, transfixing and astonishing dignitaries and scholars of the town. He qualified for issuing *fatwas* (independent legal opinions) at the age of nineteen and assumed the teaching chair of his father at the age of twenty-one.<sup>6</sup> al-Bazzār narrated that a Jew used to interrupt his way in his younger age to pose questions as he noticed the signs of intelligence in him. Ibn Taymiyyah used to

answer his questions, pointing to the misconceptions and discrepancies in his religion.

This frequently happened until at last the Jew was convinced and converted to Islam.<sup>7</sup>

He learned arithmetic, committed the Quran to memory and learned writing at an early age. He mastered Arabic linguistics, *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, commentary on the Quran, history, algebra, logic, astronomy and comparative religion and even started writing books in his teenage. He debated in his prepubescent age. He had many means of strengths: strength in stalwartness, strength of memory, strength of personality, strength of voice and declamation and strength of intelligence.<sup>8</sup> Ibn Abdul-Hādī sketched the academic endeavor in his early life thus:

...and they [Ibn Taymiyyah and his family] arrived at Damascus in the year six hundred sixty seven [667 AH] and studied under Zaynuddīn Aḥmad bin Abdul-Dāyīm bin Ni‘mah Al-Maqdisī the volume of Ibn Arafah, and other books.

Then our teacher studied under many, such as Ibn Abil-Yusr, Al-Kamāl bin ‘Abd, Shamsuddīn Al-Hanbalī, Qāḍī Shamsuddīn bin ‘Atā’ al-Hanafī, Jamāluddīn Al-Ṣayrafī, Majduddīn bin ‘Asākir, al-Najīb Al-Miqdad, Ibn Abil-Khayr, Ibn ‘Allan, Abu Bakr al-Harawī, Al-Kamāl Abdul-Rahīm, Fakruddīn bin Al-Bukhārī, Ibn Shaibān, al-Sharaf bin al-Qawwās, Zainab Bint Makkī, and many more.

His teachers... were more than two hundred.

He heard Musnad Ahmad [Imam Ahmad bin Ḥanbal’s collection of *ḥadīth*] many times, Mu‘jam Al-Ṭabarānī Al-Kabīr, the big collections of *ḥadīth* as well as the extracts, took much concern about *ḥadīth* and he himself read many and adhered to hearing *ḥadīth*[from *ḥadīth* scholars] for years. He heard the Ghaylāniyyāt[ a big collection of *ḥadīth* which al-Dārquṭnī compiled and narrated from Abu Bakr Al-Bazzār from Abu Ṭālib bin Ghaylān] in a session, copied and selected. He wrote al-Ṭibāq and al-Athbāt, learned writing and arithmetic in the madrasah, occupied himself with learning sciences, committed the Quran to memory, then resorted to Islamic Jurisprudence, then the Arabic language under Abdul-Qawī to good comprehension, read and deliberated the book of Sībawayh, understood it and mastered the Arabic grammar. Moreover, he directed all his interest to the commentary of the Quran until he broke the record in that. He also had great command over the fundamentals of fiqh; all these when was only in his teenage.<sup>9</sup>

By the beginning of his third decade he was a fully qualified scholar, capable of debating and convincing, writing books, issuing fatwas, holding classes that were attended by not only the masses but also the scholars and rulers, and which brought him great fame in the Muslim world. Scholars, supporters and adversaries<sup>10</sup>, acknowledged his being a big figure in the academic domain, an invincible force in debates, and as a comprehensive encyclopedia.<sup>11</sup> He was characterized by endurance and indefatigable persistence in research.

As narrated by the contemporaries, once he was discussing any topic, it seemed to the audience to be the only subject he mastered. This is the testimony of the hostile contemporary the maliki scholar, Ibn Makhlūf.

He was an avid reader, persistent knowledge seeker and feeling an ever-lasting thirst for details in religious matters. Throughout his life, he was not seen involved in other than reading, teaching, writing, preaching, issuing legal opinions or expounding Islamic theology and law. His brother who undertook to take charge of financing him has spared him the quest for the worldly gains necessary for sustenance. He devoted all his time for the quest and dissemination of religious sciences and the defense of Islam. Often, he used to write, teach or dictate extemporaneously. For example, he dictated a whole volume in explanation of the Quranic chapter called *al-Ikhlās* (i.e. the 112<sup>th</sup> chapter in the Quran). Hardly had he quoted a *ḥadīth* except that he was able to mention the imam who collected it, the companion who narrated it and the authenticity or otherwise of the narration. Once he was imprisoned in Egypt with no references at his disposal, but he wrote many books small and big and enriched his discussions therein with the necessary quotations from the Quran, *sunnah* and the sayings of the companions, mentioning the names of the authors and narrators, attributing every quotation to its authority and the books taken from. Such writings were checked by some of his disciples and found to be sound. An example of such improvised books is his *al-Ṣārim al-Maslūl*, which is overflowing with quotations, intricate and delicate arguments and discussions with striking originality. He initiated the discussion in clear language, proposed decisions, quoted, analyzed weighed the evidences, accepted and rejected, all in uninterrupted flow.<sup>12</sup> A Jew brought him a poem skeptically questioning the Islamic doctrine of *qadar* (predestination). Ibn Taymiyyah thought for a while and wrote an impromptu one hundred-eighty-four-line poem following the same meter and rhyme in a lucid form that if a commentary is attempted, it would run to two volumes. His responses were described as spontaneously proceeding, seemingly effortlessly as if known and prepared for in advance and pronounced with no pauses or hesitation.<sup>13</sup> It was enough for him to read a book once to recall it whenever he wished to quote therefrom either in word or meaning. People from remote territories would come to him with probing questions. Then he would sit and scribble --on the spot-- pamphlets and booklets in response to



their queries. He used to give full answers, and if he felt that his answer would lead to other doubts; he used to clarify that too along with many of the relevant matters, thus, dispelling misconceptions and disambiguating intricate concepts and issues. He was very swift in writing, which rendered his handwriting too illegible for the fresh reader.

### **2.3 Areas of Interest**

He demonstrated a great command in commenting on the Holy Quran. For a very short verse, he was able to write a big volume. He himself admitted that before proceeding to explain a verse of the Quran, he would read one hundred references on the same. Therefore, he soon became an encyclopedic exegete having no parallel in his age, and authored rich commentaries on certain parts of the Quran. The extant portions are probably less than the lost ones. He wrote, for example, on the meaning of *Istighāthah* ( i.e., to say: I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Satan), *Basmalah* (i.e., so say: In the Name of Allah...) and tens of selective verses of the Quran.

Moreover, Islamic theology was the field on which he favored to focus much of his writing.<sup>14</sup> He wrote and debated a lot to prove what he believed to be the orthodox belief of the followers of the Prophet and had to face the bitter consequences thereof. He devoted much of his writing to explicating the meaning and manifestations of worship, which is the exclusive right of Allah and draw clear lines of demarcation between the Islamic concept of monotheism and its opposite. He discussed many issues that stemmed from the discussions of the scholars of the time and adduced rational and scriptural evidences in substantiation of his arguments. The precedence of reason over revelation, the intercession of the dead on behalf of those who seek their blessings and the travel initiated to visit the graves typified the discussions in vogue. The beatific names and attributes of Allah and refutation of the denial of attributes as well as anthropomorphism occupied a big space in his writing.

Furthermore, from the legacy he left behind, it is obvious how authoritative he was in the field of *ḥadīth*. He memorized a huge number of *aḥādīth* along with their references, degree of authenticity, the narrators thereof, etc. When he wrote about any matter of religious import, he deployed and rallied a large number of *aḥādīth* in substantiation of his arguments, refuting, inter alia, the opposing views, evaluating the evidences they adduced in a very smooth way, without deliberation on the

arrangement of the ideas or the affectation of style and method. Hardly did he read a *ḥadīth* that he was able to probe into its meaning, check its authenticity and relevance to the topic under question make substantive comments on the narrators and crosscheck his with those of the experts in the field. al-Dhahabī said, “a *ḥadīth* not known to Ibn Taymiyyah is not a *ḥadīth* an epithet that was ascribed to *ḥadīth* specialists such as Yaḥya Ibn Ma‘īn, Abu Zur‘ah, etc.

In jurisprudence, he occupied a prominent place among the scholars of Islam. He was more aware of the approaches and principles of the founders of the various schools of thoughts than those who followed and specialized in such schools. When discussing any juristic opinions of the followers of schools, he could point out confidently where such scholars deviated from the theories and principles of their respective imams. He supported every issue he discussed with quotations from the *ṣaḥabah* or the jurists or both. Although he was a Ḥanbali jurist, he followed no particular school. He believed it is prohibited for any one qualified to make independent opinions to imitate any of the imams, who themselves warned against following them if their opinions were not in line with the evidences. He vehemently opposed blind imitation, and encouraged *ijtihād* to those capable of tackling it. He rightly believed that Allah and His messenger have the exclusive right to be followed. He was able to take action and issue a fatwa in perplexing situations where the people were too hesitant to take decision such as when the Qāzān-led campaign assaulted Shām (Great Syria). The Mongols at that time had already professed Islam. The Muslims in Shām divided in their opinion regarding the expedient way to ward off the attack. His juristic opinions are widely dispersed in his works, densely associated with citations from the Quran and *Sunnah* and the orthodox ancestors in Islam and were highly convincing. On a few issues, he even opposed the opinions of the four imams, instigating the criticism and confrontation of the contemporaries, who acted only within the confinement of the four schools.

He possessed a comprehensive knowledge on religious sciences and acquired great position in some other secular sciences, such as logic and philosophy, in which he discussed the systems of argumentations of not only the Muslims but also those of Aristotle and Plato in a purely rational but strongly convincing manner. He had also good knowledge about arithmetic and algebra. He was a great linguist. He had read

*al-Kitāb*, Sibawayh's masterpiece, despite its intricate details, comprehended it, and was even able to find eighty points that needed to be reevaluated in that book. Additionally, he demonstrated in his debates and discussions good knowledge of history. In answering the different wrong allegations, he could point out the anachronisms therein.<sup>15</sup>

## **2.4 Physical and Moral Features**

Ibn Taymiyyah was white with a black head and a beard mixed with a few gray hairs. He was middle in height. His eyes were like speaking tongues. His shoulders were wide. His voice was clearly audible with a fluent tongue, quick in reading. He used to have a streak of harshness in debates but soon he would restrain himself with clemency and magnanimity, and reached the acme in excessive courage, tolerance and sharp wit.<sup>16</sup>

### **2.4.1 Sincerity**

One of the outstanding characteristics of Ibn Taymiyyah was his sincerity in his career. This is evident from the fact that he had been throughout his life exerting to bring back the prophetic practice to life enduring all such incarcerations and detentions without obtaining any worldly gains, neither money nor offices. Rather he sought no offices, favoring to live solely for disseminating true Islamic knowledge and practice. He used to say boldly what he believed to be the truth without any conservation or fear. This was due to his alacrity to jeopardize his life, prestige or fame for the service of Allah. He used to cast the truth in the face of sovereignties and rulers uncompromisingly.

Ibn Taymiyyah was not only a man of powerful memory. Rather what set him apart from the scholars of the time beside his memory was his deep and scrupulous search for truth. In watching hours of the night, he would spend a long time trying to understand a single issue, imploring Allah for the disclosure of the right solution. His study of matters was thorough and encompassing. For one single matter, he would review the whole literature and exhaust all the evidences available, analyze and judge. For example, in discussing whether the Prophet saw Allah, he said, "we have pondered over all what has been written and quoted, which were almost one hundred

books, but found nothing authentically narrated from a companion or imam.”<sup>17</sup> He immersed deep in the secrets of topics and came out with independent but well-searched conclusions that he adhered to and proclaimed boldly even if such conclusions happened to be in open contradiction of the opinions of the leaders of the four schools. His main references were the Quran, the *Sunnah* and the consensus of the scholars. This trend inflicted on him the animosity of some of those of imitative propensity, which he totally ignored. Shamsuddīn al-Dhahabī, accounting the reasons of his animosity with some scholars, said:

He was a man who least humored people with often hurried reaction. He was not interested in official privileges, nor did he go by the norms of the politicians [protocols in today’s language, if so to speak]. He helped his enemies against himself by indulging in discussing issues bigger than the minds and the knowledge of people of the time could tolerate.<sup>18</sup>

When talking or writing about any issue, it appears to the audience that all the textual and rational evidences are present before his eyes and roll over in timely moments on his tongue effortlessly. This enabled his conclusions to be very authentic and authoritative and left his adversaries stunned and subdued.<sup>19</sup> Any one reading his literature thinks that he hardly ignored anything and left almost no minute detail to be added.

#### **2.4.2 Austerity**

Ibn Taymiyyah was invested with a nature uninterested in this world since his childhood. al-Bazzār said that an eyewitness told him that the father of Ibn Taymiyyah told his teacher to encourage him to study with the payment of forty dirhams to be given to him monthly if he worked hard to study and memorize the Quran. In response to this offer, Ibn Taymiyyah said to his teacher, “sir, I have made an oath of allegiance to Allah not to receive any allowance for the Quran.” al-Bazzār added that if a common person of the time was asked who was the most ready to reject worldly interests and was most keen in seeking the Hereafter, he would say: Ibn Taymiyyah.<sup>20</sup> When he travelled to Egypt to mobilize the Muslim army against the Mongols, he was offered a daily allowance and gifts. Content with his mean resources, he willingly turned down the offer. Thus, he led an austere life, eating and wearing modestly, wishing for no more.

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### **2.4.3 Courage and Generosity**

He was a man of proverbial courage. This is evident in the situations where he was alone in the front line. As stated above, he used to make opinions depending on revelation and the legacy of the companions of the Prophet, even if that contradicted the popular belief regarding such issues. He used to sacrifice being harassed for freedom of research. He upheld the conclusions he arrived at after conscientious research, disregarding the reaction and indignation of the scholars and rulers of the time, who followed the schools of thought. Another sign of courage was the unparalleled role he played in fighting the Mongols and the heretic Nusayrids.<sup>21</sup> During such fight, eyewitnesses reported, he was in the front line encouraging the fighters through preaches, promising them of the reward assigned by Allah to those defending the frontiers of Islam; and acted what he preached. He played a combatant and mobilizing role. When he mounted his horse, he would show himself like the strongest knight and firmest fighter, crying the Islamic war cry '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is the greatest).

Moreover, when Qāzān approached Damascus for attack, Ibn Taymiyyah, accompanied by the sages of the town, entered his presence and he was the spokesman of the group saying, "you claim that you are a Muslim and have a qāḍi, imam, a sheikh,...your father and your grandfather were disbelievers but did not do what you have done. They signed pacts and remained loyal to them but you promised and betrayed and were not as good as your word."<sup>22</sup> He did not eat the food offered to them there, clearly explaining that the food is made from the animals looted from the people and cooked with the wood logged from the trees of the peasants. Qāzān felt unusual awe and asked him to pray for him.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, a common man complained to Ibn Taymiyyah about one of the authoritarian rulers of the time. Ibn Taymiyyah came to such person, who sarcastically said to Ibn Taymiyyah, "it is I, who wanted to come to you because you are an austere scholar." Ibn Taymiyyah said, "Do not play tricks. Moses [the prophet] was better than me and Pharaoh was worse than you but Moses used to come many times a day to the door of Pharaoh to invite him to the faith."<sup>24</sup>

#### **2.4.4 Magnanimity**

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In every occasion, Ibn Taymiyyah came to prominence and his word was even more audible than that of the scholars holding official positions. His independence in research and opposition of the followers of the different schools irritated them and so they plotted to block or hinder his progress. They caused him many apprehensions. Yet, when he was able to retaliate, he epitomized the magnanimous brother. This occurred when Al-Mansūr Muhammad bin Qalāwūn came to power for the third time and wanted to avenge himself on those who took part in his ouster, including some religious scholars who also had often conspired and harmed Ibn Taymiyyah. Al-Mansūr consulted him about executing some of them, reminding him of the inconveniences Ibn Taymiyyah was inflicted because of them, and imploring to get a *fatwa* from him to carry out the revenge legally. Ibn Taymiyyah reminded him that those were the scholars of Islam, the like of whom was rare to find, and pleaded amnesty. He carried on dissuading him until he at last forgave them. Further, Ibn Taymiyyah declared that all those who participated in harming him were clear from his grievances.

The Maliki qāḍi, Ibn Makhlūf, who was on bad terms with Ibn Taymiyyah, confessed, “We did not see like Ibn Taymiyyah. We incited people against him but he eluded us; however, when he was able to retaliate, he pardoned us and argued in our favor.”<sup>25</sup> Ibn Qayyim said, “I have not seen anyone representing these qualities [the highest degrees of magnanimity] as Ibn Taymiyyah, to the extent that one of his friends said, ‘I wish I could treat my friends [as kindly] as Ibn Taymiyyah does to foes.’”<sup>26</sup> Ibn Qayyim said that one day he brought him the news of the death of one of his avowed enemies, who had fiercely harmed him. Ibn Taymiyyah scolded, frowned at him and got immediately to the deceased’s family, consoled them and told them to consider him their father and requested them never to hesitate to ask his help whenever in need.<sup>27</sup> He used to pray for his enemies, who instigated the peoples and rulers and even those who appealed for his execution. For example, Ali bin Ya‘qūb al-Bakrī, was one of the Sufī scholars, who advocated the concept of seeking succor from the dead saints, Ibn Taymiyyah authored a book in which he refuted and rejected the practice as an innovation. He got furious and targeted Ibn Taymiyyah. Some Sufi scholars demanded that he be penalized but al-Bakrī appealed to the rulers that he

should be executed as an infidel. He even met Ibn Taymiyyah in isolation and now supported by Sufi common people, avenged himself by beating him. He spared no chance to defame or harass him. Indignant fans and supporters from different social strata came to the aid of Ibn Taymiyyah, asking him to decide as to which punishment should be applied to the antagonist Sufi. Ibn Taymiyyah said that he never avenged himself. People urged him not to concede in this way. He responded, “The right is mine, yours or Allah’s. If it is mine, I have pardoned them. If it is yours, do not ask if you are unwilling to follow my advice. If it is Allah’s, He will take His whenever He wishes and in the way He favors.” This was in the year 711 AH. Nevertheless, the fans wanted to discipline al-Bakrī. He resorted to Ibn Taymiyyah, who graciously and ungrudgingly interceded on his behalf and requested that he be acquitted.<sup>28</sup> Thus, he was fair and kind to both his fans and foes. His aim was not to induce any problems and disturbances among the Muslims. He said, “I, by Allah, am one of the keenest to help in extinguishing any evil in this and in others and in establishing good. If Ibn Makhlūf does whatever [hostile actions] to me, by Allah, never will I be able to do him any good except that I will do it and will not support his enemy against him...this is my intention and inclination although I know everything [of the enemies’ actions.]<sup>29</sup>

This moral character is clearly demonstrated in discussing, debating and answering the deviants. He used to mention the good aspects of the opponents. He used to admit the virtues of men even if they were his opponents and innovators in his opinion. For example, when he talked about Ibn Kullāb, whom he criticized on other issues, he said that he had virtues, knowledge and faith, credited with rebutting the Jahmites.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, he defended him when some people charged him that he intended to spread Christianity in the Muslim lands.<sup>31</sup> Further, he was asked about the sālimite sect. He answered that they were generally Sunnis; followers of Abul-Ḥasan bin Sālim...deviated in some issues and so were considered as innovators.<sup>32</sup> Once he was invited to debate with a Shafiite knowledgeable scholar. After the debate, he was asked to comment on the scholar. He said, “I saw a man with the Shafiite thought dripping from his beard,”<sup>33</sup> meaning the man had overwhelming knowledge. He spoke well of his antagonists before the sultan, interceded on their behalf, and pleaded that they be pardoned. He warned the sultan that if he killed them, he would not find any

more knowledgeable than them. The rule he applied in judging people is as he himself explained: it is possible that same person or group will have correct and incorrect beliefs or practices. They are then worthy of praise in their good deeds and worthy of punishment in their erroneous ones. To mention and highlight either exaggeratedly is unfair. Allah's religion is to strike a middle way between the two extremes. Then he gave an example of Abul-Ḥasan Al-Ash 'arī. He said that the latter had a worthwhile response to the innovators, which should be praised if pure intention was maintained and had diverted from the path of *sunnah* in some issues, on which he is to be dispraised, if insisted after being informed.<sup>34</sup> Although he launched the fiercest attack against the Shia, he admitted, "Some of them have faith and good deeds."<sup>35</sup> He also said, "Amongst them are devout worshippers, remote from transgression and are austere."<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, in his talking about the Mu'tazilites he said that they, despite their deviation, "supported Islam in many situations and rebutted the atheists with rational evidences."<sup>37</sup>

#### **2.4.5 Mercifulness**

Ibn Taymiyyah was a man of tender humanitarian feeling. He would respond kindly to whosoever needed his help. He would not hesitate to give anything in his possession to those who needed succor. He would visit the needy and vulnerable and enquire about their needs, and do the best he could to alleviate their sufferings. If he had nothing to offer, he would even take off some of his clothes and give them away. Moreover, he would stint on the food he had, to oblige the indigent.<sup>38</sup> As an eyewitness reportedly told al-Bazzār, Ibn Taymiyyah never refused to give anything asked from him even his original books. Rather he would tell the asker to take whatever by himself.<sup>39</sup>

Besides holding that rank in the academic realm, he was a model for humility. Al-Bazzār reported that he did not see anyone in his time like Ibn Taymiyyah in that. He was extremely humble with all: the elderly and the young, the elites and the common, the good well-off people and the poor. He would even be more kind to the poor than to the affluent, entertaining, amusing and sharing with them and even serving them to console them. He did not get bored with anyone enquiring about matters of religion. He would, instead, be cheerful and show amiability to all indiscriminately. He would



himself carry the copy of the pupil who came to him for classes. If the student rushed to do that instead, he would retort that since the written were the sayings of the messenger of Allah, he should carry it. He would sit in an insignificant place in a session gathering him with his students.<sup>40</sup>

He exaggeratedly venerated the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. In very critical and hard situations, he adheres to what he knew to be the prophetic way. For example, after succeeding in deploying the forces against the Mongols, he was there in the Muslim army. The ruler of the Egyptian army wanted him to join his battalion, but he apologized because according to the *Sunnah*, he should be with the battalion of Shām as they were his people. He followed the example of the Prophet also in that he ordered people to break the fast as the Prophet did in the battle during the month of Ramadan.<sup>41</sup> He exerted his full efforts to live according to the prophetic model, starting from his personal affairs such as clothing, drinking, eating, etc., to public life where he is mixing with people. He combined between the retreat life and the social life. He had been seen in the mosque where he listened to the people and issued fatwas. He also visited the ill, attended funeral ceremonies, went round, bidding the good and forbidding the wrong, etc. He also spent much time in praying supererogatory prayers. He was a devoted worshipper, with proverbially excellent and solemn performance. He exemplified firm belief in Allah. In the fight against the Mongols, he promised the Muslims that they would be victorious. His prayer was often answered. He used to pray for the people for quick recovery, aid, etc., and soon got his prayers answered. He gave glad tidings to the people that their woes will soon be alleviated, and soon stability was restored through the ouster of Baybars II (Al-Jāshinkīr).

Therefore, we can conclude that the antagonist campaign launched against him is unjustifiably prejudiced. Moreover, the debates and responses he carried out were out of compassionate bent for rectification of conduct and not in humiliation or exclusion of others.

## 2.5 Debates

Ibn Taymiyyah's aim was to restore the way of the orthodox generations (the *salaf*). He spared no effort in trying to reach this end. Further, the age he lived was, in his

estimation, replete with alien ideas and erroneous doctrines. The cultural contact with the others and the foreign encroachments, among many other factors, brought about many deviations in religion and more specifically to matters related to the Islamic doctrine or faith. He was a man of rigorous faith and powerful polemics. Taymiyyah was described in debates as:

He cannot be defeated through misunderstanding as he had excessive cleverness, nor through shortage of knowledge as his knowledge was unfathomable, nor did he manipulate religion, nor did he uphold views independently out of desire, nor did he draw random conclusions. Rather, he would support his arguments and debates with the Quran, *hadīth* and analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), following his reliable predecessors. Therefore, he is rewarded once for his mistakes and twice for his right decisions.<sup>42</sup>

However, he was not the first to tackle this task. In terms of the Islamic theology, Ibn Taymiyyah meticulously tried to follow the same doctrines the *salaf* upheld and the four imams. He never opposed their theological doctrines. But the age he lived was full of the issues that needed to be reinvestigated in the light of the circumstances surmounting real life. There are some who try to portray him as a man who came to oppose the mainstream belief or innovate in religion. Therefore, a brief account of how all differences in theology came into being in the Muslim world will reveal what was the original belief the *salaf* advocated. The following paragraphs will shed light on this issue.

### **2.5.1 The Theological Development across History**

From a pure Islamic point of view, the best way is the way laid down by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and traced by his followers. This was the most accepted way. This can be reflected by comparing between the mainstream trend and the subsequent changes that were modeled by different sects and factions and which effected debates and theorization. The formative period of the theological debates can be dissected into the following stages<sup>43</sup>:

- The first stage extends across the first century. They used to depend wholly on the Quran and the *Sunnah* in relation to ‘*aqīdah* without going into detailed elaborations therein. As people were still capable of understanding the Quran through Arabic, which they mastered, there was no need for the written material. Islam remained pristine and devoid of any superstitions or

innovations. People were more in need of education, which the companions carried out amply. If any filthy ideas infiltrated into the society, they could be easily distinguished as abnormal and intrusive. The people who broke with the guidance of the companions, (who were the most knowledgeable and nearest to prophetic example), were the first to fall victims of this plague. The Shia<sup>44</sup> and the kharijites, (whom Ali fought), not only deprived themselves from the prophetic guidance through condemning its bearers (the companions who narrated the authentic doctrine) but also cursed them and charged them with disbelief. This undermined their allegiance with the Prophet, and severed their ties with the original teachings. This singled them out as insignificant groups of innovators in a pure community.

- The second century: now people felt the need to answer the innovators, through writing. In doing so, they needed to set rules and find definitions of terms such as *īmān* (faith), its increase and decrease, *qadar* (predestination) and its core concepts, seeing Allah, the speech of Allah, His names and attributes and other terms which in the first century used to be discussed in general terms when people were aware of the language. The need was more urgent in the second century as they needed to clarify the terms, their meanings and rules that control such concepts and how to set them according to full-fledged investigation in the Quran and *Sunnah* into separate works. As people started denying some previously acknowledged matters such as seeing Allah, the divine predestination, the Quran as Allah's uncreated word and went to extremes on penalty and pardon of sin, formulating the rules and writing had become necessary. Furthermore, in this century, small polemical responses to specific sects and particulars of doctrine also appeared, albeit in a small number.
- The third century: here the need became even more urgent. The deviants in turn had formulated rules for the justification and thereby promulgation of their doctrines. Comprehensive researches in response to them were produced in which the previous literature as well as the Quran and *Sunnah* were more vehemently explored. These researches, at this time, were based on well-defined methodology and terminology.

- The fourth century: in this century, speculative theology swept over the reliable scientific trend in most of the Muslim lands. The latter methodology had its supporters but they were comparatively a few since then down to the age of Ibn Taymiyyah. This also provided fertile environment for the esotericism and rafidite thought. The emergence of doctrine identified with the statelets such as Fatimids, Buwaihids and Kharijites, etc., occasioned the dominance of speculative thought over the orthodox and slackened the earlier adherence to textual evidences.

In a like manner, Mutazilite School prospered in times when the leaders at the late Abbasid rule championed it. Abul-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, the founder of the Ash‘arī School, was a Mutazilite theologian. He mastered the thought, discovered its faults and reverted to the School of *Ahl-Alḥdīth*, later known as Ḥanbali School in theology, most probably because at that time the leading imam of the school was Ahmad bin Ḥanbal, the founder of the ḥanbali *fiqhi* School and the most prominent of those who faced the inquisition of the Mu‘tazilites. Al-Ash‘ari aimed at proving the same doctrine rationally in order to combat the Mu‘tazilites with their own approach. Still, he is sometimes seen divided between the schools, thus arriving at inconclusive conclusions. Al-Ash‘arī declared in his *al-Ibānah* that he is the follower of Ahmad bin Ḥanbal in his doctrine.<sup>45</sup> The Ḥanbalites and the Ash‘arites remained the two schools that preponderantly retained the orthodox faith.<sup>46</sup> The majority of scholars were followers of either. Although there were differences between them, they were interdependent. However, hostilities between the two schools erupted only in the year 469 AH when Abu Nasr Ibn al-Qushayrī arrived at Baghdad and taught in the Nizāmiyyah School. He was an ash‘rite from the east. He fervently praised his school and at the same time, bigotedly vilified the ḥanbalites.<sup>47</sup> This immediately triggered a warlike conflict between the followers of the two schools. It was the first clash of its type to emerge between them.<sup>48</sup> Since then prejudice has been observed in the writings of some scholars of the two schools. By the Mamlūk era heated debates reached a climax, which Ibn Taymiyyah said to have tried to mitigate.

This gives a clear indication as to the development and evolution of the approaches and sects. Ibn Taymiyyah strove for the *salafi* way most of the time shorn of formal protection. He was sometimes detained and ostracized. However, through his

charisma, professionalism and dynamism he could mobilize even the formal machineries to the fulfillment of his high aspirations in the defense of Islam.

Ibn Taymiyyah criticized individuals and groups on the bases of the following:

- Because they adopted faulty approaches, (speculative, philosophical, esoteric, etc.) in understanding Islam;
- Because they gave reason precedence over revelation;
- Because of partial and incomplete study in which some of the evidences are neglected;
- Because of altering the orthodox way of understanding and deduction;
- Because they invented new doctrines; or
- Because they tried to nullify some elements in Sharia

On the bases of these reasons, he opposed the Asharites, Jahmites, esotericism, Shia, etc., debated with all these either in writing or in councils in the presence of formal and informal audience.

## **2.5.2 Themes of Debate**

The areas of research which caused difference between Ibn Taymiyyah and his contemporaries were quite great in number. However, there are main and major points which can represent a wide range of such differences. In the following paragraphs some of such main points are discussed.

### **2.5.2.1 Divine Attributes**

The Jahmites denied Allah's attributes, denied man's free will, denied the beatific vision (i.e., seeing Allah in the Hereafter), and believed that Paradise and Hell would perish after being populated and that the Quran is created and many others.<sup>49</sup> The Mu'tazilah adopted a rational method in studying the Islamic doctrine. To the vitiation of Sharia, they assign to mind the identification of good and bad; they claimed that the Quran was created, that man was completely free and was therefore the author of his own acts, and that a perpetrator of major sins was neither a Muslim nor a disbeliever; rather, he is in a middle position. Nevertheless, they believed that

on the day of resurrection such would be cast in Hell, ineligible for the Prophet's intercession.

The Ash'arites affirmed only seven divine attributes and denied the rest on the ground that they will be understood as resembling those of humans. They were also divided between the literal and allegorical interpretation of the attributes that have semblance of human physique, such as the hand and the face, etc. While their leader, Abul-Hasan, was inclined to the literal, some of his followers tended to favor the allegorical. It should be noted, however, that the belief in the literal meaning does not mean that Allah, for example, has a physical hand. Rather, He does have a hand but such hand necessarily does not resemble those of the creatures, as there is none like him. He has hands the features of which are unknown to people. They (Ash'arites) also argue that Allah's word is eternal as it comes from the eternal. This goes against the fact that Allah makes fresh speech whenever He wishes. Moreover, they believe that Allah's word does not differ from nation to nation. It is the same to all. In Hebrew, it is the Torah, while in Arabic; it is the Quran and so on. In reaction to the Mu'tazilite concept of free will, they affirmed that Allah has created the actions of man while he is only provided some power to carry out such acts, which they term as *kasb* (earning). Therefore, his role is not instrumental; in reality, man has no will of his own.

Ibn Taymiyyah argued that Allah's attributes are rationally undeniable, since none can deny His being existent, living, etc., the denial of which is tantamount to atheism. To believe in a god with no attributes is to worship a non-being. To acknowledge some and deny some under the pretext that they lead to anthropomorphism is not fair, since according to this logic, this applies to all attributes. The creator and creation share the names of attributes. In reality, however, they are entirely different, very much as they are different among creatures.

#### **2.5.2.2 Divine and Human Acts**

Ibn Taymiyyah also argued that man is fully responsible for his acts because both options are open to him and he can freely choose either. However, to believe that Allah does not create man's actions is firstly a stark opposition to the Quran<sup>50</sup> and secondly leads to the conclusion that there are incidents in this universe in which

Allah does not interfere or will. Moreover, it is unjust on Allah's part to punish man for something he cannot avoid. As to the perpetration of major sins, Ibn Taymiyyah stated that Allah and His messenger recognized the thief, adulterer, the wine drinker, murderer, etc., as believers, though they are punishable; and it is up to Allah either to punish or pardon.

He opposed the principle of justice as set by the Mu'tazilites. According to them, all that Allah can do is just and good. This sounds perfect. However, they infer two conclusions from this: the first is that Allah has nothing to do with man's actions. (See above). They negate that Allah wills or intervenes in man's actions, including his misdeeds. The second is that Allah does not will bad things to happen. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that Allah does what is just and refrains from doing unjust things. He is exalted high above doing anything bad or unjust. He enjoins the right and forbids the wrong and false. Ibn Taymiyyah also propounded that nothing escapes His predestination. Good and bad events occur by His leave. In the same manner, Allah wills man's deeds the good and bad inclusively. Ibn Taymiyyah assigned the *Qadariyyah's* reluctance to accept this doctrine to the lack of distinction between two different but related concepts, viz, the will and the pleasure of Allah. He wills all incidents in the universe and nothing happens without His will but He likes obedience and dislikes disobedience, likes good and hates evil, and so on.

### **2.5.2.3 The Quran: Created or Uncreated?**

Regarding the Quran, Ibn Taymiyyah believes that it is the word that Allah spoke to the Prophet through the ways of revelation.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, it should not be attributed to any other. The Quran understood as such, cannot be said to be created. The speech is an inseparable attribute of Allah, and cannot be said to be standing on its own right. Anyone hearing the Quran is hearing Allah's speech. The Prophet is reported to have said: "who will protect me so as to convey Allah's speech." Allah calls the Quran 'the speech of Allah'.<sup>52</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah vehemently rejected the idea of the creation of the *kalām* (speech, part of which is the Quran) as it leads to the conclusion that Allah's attributes are created, although he stated that the paper and the ink with which the Quran is written as well as the voice of the human reader of the Quran are created. To say that the Quran as sound and letter is subsistent in Allah is, according to Ibn

Taymiyyah, an innovation<sup>3</sup>. The predecessors in the first three generations did not discuss this issue nor did they ever question the Quran being the word of Allah.

The Quran and the *Sunnah* are clear in referring to the Quran as *Kalāmullāh* (Allah's speech). This is enough to settle the problem. Nevertheless, the perplexing part is in the man's reading the Quran. On the one hand, it is the action of man, (which the opponents adhered to) and on the other hand, what man is reading is Allah's speech that He revealed to His Prophet, and, therefore, Allah's speech should not be said to be created, (which Ibn Taymiyyah firmly stood for). The idea first germinated in the deviant heads (Jahmites). The Mu'tazilah set for themselves the rule that Allah should not be described with attributes because this would imply multiplicity; hence their denial of the divine attributes. *Kalām* is no exception. It is an attribute. Therefore, it goes against their approach if they acknowledge the Quran as Allah's *Kalām*. Ibn Taymiyyah asserted that the Quran is the uncreated word of Allah. He also admitted that the voice of the reader of the Quran is created. These two propositions are obviously tenable. However, his insistence that the Quran in letter and sound is *Kalāmullāh* may seem inconclusive. Nevertheless, his insistence is justified when the whole scenario becomes clear.

Ibn Taymiyyah was vigilantly aware that the claim that the Quran was created was an attempt to divest Allah of His attribute of speech and reduce him to a dumb being, who created the Quran in the angel who in turn conveyed the message to the messengers. When Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that the Quran was in letter and sound the uncreated word of God, he is speaking of the way it was spoken by Allah. It should not be understood as to mean that he did not differentiate between the Quran when first revealed as the spoken word of Allah and the reading of the reader. He is also aware of the difference between the *kalām* and sound produced by the human reader. The *kalām* denotes the meaning and content of the Quran, which has a different ontological realization from the action of the human being. The Mu'tazilites' position is precarious, because all existent beings have more than one attribute and the very same thing can have too many attributes. Thus, the multiplicity of the attributes does not contradict the singularity of the subject.



Ibn Taymiyyah also debated with Sufis. Sufism underwent many changes and passed through many stages ranging from the purity of monotheism and complete following of the Prophet to superstitions and innovations. In later generations appeared theories alien to Islam. Some of the Sufis thought of exempting themselves from the duties of Sharia. At some stage, they free themselves from its bounds. Ibn Taymiyyah quoted a Sufi mystic as saying that, “the seeker of their [Sufis’] path in his initial stages differentiates between obedience and disobedience...then he sees only obedience... then sees neither obedience nor disobedience.”<sup>54</sup>It means that the beginner Sufi starts like any one, differentiating between what is pleasant to Allah and what is not. However, as he goes up along those degrees of Sufism, he relies mainly on *qadar*. Whatever he does, he attributes that to Allah’s predestination. He is not culpable for any mistake. Then he reaches a stage where he sees the existence as one. Here there is no difference between good and bad or monotheism and polytheism. These had allegedly transcended the simple human existence and claimed that they had attained union with the divine existence, so much so, that they (the human and the divine existence) were inseparable and undistinguishable. This culminated into the pantheism theory.

Ibn Taymiyyah further clarifies their aspects of deviation by saying that a group of those who discussed monotheism following the Sufi approach upheld that to prove Allah’s lordship is the final aim and to get self-annihilation in that is the end. Any one reaching this stage is no longer bound to differentiate between the good and the bad; and this led them to rescind the impositions and the prohibitions and the promise and the threat, laid down by Allah. They did not distinguish between the will of Allah, which is inclusive of all creations, and His love and pleasure, which are conditional on obeying Him. Allah wills the good and the bad but likes the good only. All that occurs in this world is by His leave and will, but He commands and likes only the good. Others turned into witchcrafts, boasting high ranks of self-righteousness and miraculously awesome states. Some believed that a *walī* (saint, a pious man) has an edge over the prophet, because they claimed that the former received from Allah through no medium, unlike the latter.

Ibn Taymiyyah has categorized Sufis into different classes: some are pious people and devout worshippers who lead austere life and had no interest in wealth and power. Their main aim is to please Allah. Some were mercenaries, seeking sustenance through pretentious asceticism. His hottest debate was directed towards those who introduced new notions in religion undermining the very principle of monotheism. He stated that people like Ibn ‘Arabī and Ibn Sab‘īn denied the creator and claimed that the very existence of the creature is the existence of the creator and that there is nothing beyond the heavens. Ibn ‘Arabi went as far as to believe that dwellers of the Paradise and the dwellers of the Hellfire are both enjoying, though differently. Ibn Taymiyyah was right in his attack against this because they annul the divine message. Allah sent prophets to people to set the criterion of what is good and what is not and promised the reward according to the actions. To repeal this principle will cause disorder and destruction, because, according to this philosophy, people are not accountable and all will ultimately abide in the divine bliss whether in Paradise or Hellfire. They also insolently cancelled any distinction between Allah and His creation.

#### **2.5.2.5 The Bāṭiniyyah**

The *Bāṭiniyyah* (esoterists) are those who interpreted the religious texts exclusively on the bases of a hidden meaning they claim to know. In their interpretation of the Quran, for example, they may suggest meanings not in line with the context or even the language the Arabs had known. According to them only prophets and saints, know this aspect of religion. They also claimed that their imams were infallible in that they never committed any mistake. This sect included the Ismailis, the Nuṣairids, the Qarmatians, etc. it started as a secret group during the Umayyad reign. As vulnerable communities, they worked clandestinely underground but when powerful, they appeared what they really were. Some historical accounts suggested that their aim was to pervert people from the divine guidance and establish a godless society. They are against religions and morality. They were putsch mongers and revolutionary in nature. Al-Baghdādi wrote that researchers differed on the motives behind their campaign, and reported that the majority were of the opinion that that they aimed to revive Zoroastrianism, by means of the false interpretations they made to the Quran and *Sunnah*. Others attributed them to the Sabians.<sup>55</sup> He further argues that the historians

affirm that that were the descendants of the Zoroastrians, and were inclined to their faith. They did not dare to declare their faith but resorted to the misinterpretation of the Quran.<sup>56</sup> Their affair was explicit as an attempt at abolishing Sharia, but the camouflage they structured to trap people was that they claimed affinity to and support of the prophetic household, until their propaganda gained currency. They claimed the lineage of the Prophet to gain respect and support, and fortify themselves against ouster.

As to the lineage of the Ismailis, Ibn Taymiyyah believed that their ancestor was a Jew, brought up by a Magian. They did not follow the same religion as the twelvers, the Zaidis or the extremists, who believed in the divinity or the prophethood of Ali. They were more evil than those all were. Therefore, Muslim scholars wrote much about them to disclose their secrets and unravel their evil, and hence the Muslims' assault against them.<sup>57</sup>

#### **2.5.2.6 The Philosophers**

Ibn Taymiyyah identifies two kinds of philosophers:

1. The naturalists: these, according to him, denied any existence beyond the heavens. As it is clearly understood, they posited that this world is independently a necessary being; there is no originator or creator.
2. Theists: these acknowledge the existence of the Deity of this universe. This is the faction which Ibn Taymiyyah discussed more often.

The philosophers exerted their minds to prove the existence of Allah through philosophy. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes them as saying Allah cannot have attributes or be described. They, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, asserted the wisdom of Allah and denied His volition. They said that if Allah had volition, then He would be doing things for interest, but He is exalted above that. Ibn Taymiyyah rejected these postulates as self-contradictory.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, he stated that some of the philosophers denied Allah's knowledge of the particulars, and that He does not hear or respond to the prayers of people. For example, Ibn Sīna asserted that the souls of the dead could intercede on behalf of their loving visitors, by virtue of what they gain from the active intellect owing to their departure from the body. This, he asserted, could happen

without the knowledge of the interceding soul or even Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah rejected this notion categorically and justified that this way would lead people to take the graves of the righteous as objects of worship. This also reduces Allah to a helpless being. Ibn Taymiyyah saw that their approaches were conspicuously faulty and were insufficient and incapable of guiding to the true belief, the belief that Allah willed to establish in the hearts of the believers, and with which He sent His messengers. He viewed their approach as self-contradictory, blasphemous, complex, futile or all combined.

Ibn Taymiyyah's ontological theory is based on the conviction that the aim of creation and revelation to prophets is to establish the belief in the existence and oneness of Allah. Any notion violating this should be categorically ruled out. Therefore, the eternity of the world, divesting Allah of His attributes, the claim that one of the intellects created the world, and that incidents in this world emanated from the Necessary Being without His knowledge, all these, Ibn Taymiyyah rightly observed, were detrimental to the concept of *tawḥīd* (rigorous Islamic monotheism), which is what all the Divine Message is about.

## **2.6 Trials and Tribulations**

The opinions Ibn Taymiyyah held often caused him suffering due to the stereotyped practices attributed falsely to Islam. He often revolted against anything that he considered anti- Islamic. Here are some of the issues for which he met much inquisition.

### **2.6.1 The Epistle to Hamah**

The first combat was in the year 698 A. H. Ibn Taymiyyah sat in the mosque teaching as usual. Some Shafi'ī scholars floated issues in the epistle he sent to Hamah. They objected to some of the elements therein. He defended his position and answered their probes.<sup>59</sup> The session was concluded peacefully.

In the year 705, Ibn Taymiyyah accompanied an expedition to fight some Rafidites. He demonstrated great knowledge and courage in the way he co-led the expedition. This brought him great fame. Rulers now recognized his role and followed his recommendations. Envy struck the hearts of some of the peers.

## **2.6.2 Encounter with Ahmadiyyah**

In the same year, the *Ahmadiyyah* (a Sufi sect) sued Ibn Taymiyyah for freedom of religion. They requested the governor to order Ibn Taymiyyah not to interfere with their affair. Ibn Taymiyyah refused, declaring that each one is bound by the injunctions of Sharia and none can be out of such bounds. This happened when many smaller chances had occurred where he discussed to some of them and to others about the false wonders they performed and told them that they were devilish gimmicks. They boasted their ability to enter the fire without being harmed. Ibn Taymiyyah declared his willingness to meet the challenge and suggested that he and they would have bath and rub their bodies well with detergents and would enter together. They backed away. The challenge was too much for them. Rather, one of them slipped with this and confessed that their juggler could pass only to the Tatars (the Mongols). The audience caught this confession and discarded their complaint and the meetings broke up with the resolute decision that they be bound by the Sharia and leave their superstitions. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a book elaborating on their devious way.<sup>60</sup>

## **2.6.3 Al-Aqīdah Al-Wāsiṭiyyah**

In the same year, the Vice Sultan, the qāḍī s and Ibn Taymiyyah held a meeting in which they questioned some issues in Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah*. They deferred some issues to the next meeting. *Sheikh Ṣafīyyudīn Al-Hindī* was assigned to lead the discussion but he fell too short of carrying the task efficiently in the face of Ibn Taymiyyah. They agreed to deputize sheikh Jamāluddīn al-Zamalkānī to carry out the debate. Ibn Taymiyyah was very alert and truly impressed people with profound and witty discussions. The book was approved. Consequently, people cheered up the peaceful end, which was in favor of Ibn Taymiyyah. These meetings were conducted when the Sultan, induced by the Maliki qāḍī Ibn Maklūf and Naṣruddīn Al-Munbijī, had sent a decree that Ibn Taymiyyah's '*aqīdah* should be scrutinized. Then the vice sultan in Damascus left the city. The void left behind was occupied with tumults. The Maliki qāḍī punished some of the fans of Ibn Taymiyyah. The arrival of the Vice Sultan stopped hostile actions but hearts continued simmering. The same administered a third council and Ibn Taymiyyah was not convicted.

#### **2.6.4 The Anthropomorphism Charge**

In the same context, Ibn Taymiyyah was told that Nāṣruddīn Al-Munbijī had been an advocate of *waḥdatul-wujūd* (pantheism) after Ibn Arabī. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote a three hundred-line letter admonishing him for that. Naṣruddīn Al-Munbijī held a counsel with some of the qādis who (allegedly) for fear of changing the faith of the people, and rousing sedition appealed to the sultan in Cairo to summon Ibn Taymiyyah. A letter was sent to Damascus to this effect, ostensibly recognizing the previous sessions and claiming to vindicate him of the previous charges. All knew it was a trick. However, Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to promulgate his thought in Egypt, too. Elites and commoners saw him off sadly. On his arrival in Cairo, a council was held in which peer debate was expected. Ibn Taymiyyah started to talk but he was silenced. Al-Shams bin ‘Adnān was selected plaintiff, who immediately claimed that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote that Allah is on His throne in the literal sense of the word and that Allah speaks with letter and sound. The judge was Ibn Makhlūf, the Maliki scholar. Ibn Taymiyyah started to defend himself with praising Allah and so on just as it was conventional when starting a sermon. They objected to this beginning and demanded instant response to the claim.

Ibn Taymiyyah enquired about the judge. They told him that the assigned judge was the Maliki scholar. He retorted with the question, “how come that you be the judge while you are my opponent?” This infuriated the judge. A verdict was issued that Ibn Taymiyyah be incarcerated. An edict was read that he be jailed in the citadel. Religious as well as political leaders engineered, supported by a large number of jurists and Sufis, the subsequent ostracism against Ibn Taymiyyah and the Ḥanbalites.<sup>61</sup> However, in 705 he was freed. The sultan ordered the administration of a general meeting. Nevertheless, this time the leading adversaries desperately circumvented the encounter.<sup>62</sup>

#### **2.6.5 The Issue of *Istighāthah***

In the same year, another suit was reported to the authorities against Ibn Taymiyyah. The Sufis litigated him on the bases that he criticized Ibn Arabi, their spiritual model. The Shafi’ī qādi was designated judge. No point was proved against Ibn Taymiyyah, except that he insisted that *istighāthah* (succor in dire distresses) ought to be asked

from Allah alone and not the Prophet. Some scholars saw no issue in that but the Shafī'ī qāḍī viewed that as a disrespect for the Prophet. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that invocation should be addressed to Allah; then as the Prophet is closest to Allah, he may be used as a means of intercession and not the object of prayer. Then he was given choices: either to be released on conditions or to be detained.<sup>63</sup> He favored prison, despite the reluctance of his followers. He did not want to compromise his freedom of thought for freedom of body. Yet, friends could convince him to leave for Damascus. He accompanied them. Yet, the people wielding authority insisted that he be sentenced to prison. He was brought back to the court the next day. There he was told that he had to be imprisoned. Qāḍīs were indecisive to pronounce the verdict, some on the ground that he was not convicted. Therefore, he willingly went to prison, where he was served and allowed to receive visitors.

In 709 AH Ibn Taymiyyah was exiled to Alexandria. He started teaching as usual; everyday gaining more and more followers. The purpose of sending him there was that Alexandria was the old center of Sufis and Sufism. There it was expected that his approach would irritate the inhabitants and they would probably assassinate him, ridding the authorities of the persistent headache.<sup>64</sup> The top religious authority was Nāṣruddīn Al-Munbijī, the zealous advocate of Ibn Arabī, and the top political authority was the king al-Muẓaffar Baybars, who looked at Ibn Taymiyyah as the supporter of his rival al-Nāṣir, who resigned from his position due to some political reasons. Ibn Taymiyyah had no supporters in Alexandria and therefore it was expected that he would face his fatal end shorn of any public or political protection. Alexandria was the haven of the followers of Ibn Sab'īn, the mystic Sufi. This negatively affected the conduct of people and one of the gravest repercussions was that people started liberating themselves from the restrictions of Sharia. Ibn Taymiyyah vigorously fought the bad propensities and misconceptions about Islam. People loved him, and his thought quickly circulated; and the market of the innovators curtailed.

Later on in this year, there were tremendous changes that occurred in the political milieu. The king al-Nāṣir rose to power again. Now he brought back Ibn Taymiyyah from his 'asylum' and induced Ibn Taymiyyah to grant him a fatwa to penalize those scholars who supported his rival. Ibn Taymiyyah dissuaded him, spoke highly of them

and interceded on their behalf. He was so close to the heart of the king that the latter used to follow his opinion in many occasions. But Ibn Taymiyyah used this privilege in fighting corruption. For example, bribery was rampant in Syria at that time. Ibn Taymiyyah urged the king to enact strict measures to check this phenomenon. Moreover, if any governor oppressed people and he knew about that he would raise the people's grievances to the king and plead in their name that that governor be sacked.

With this tender consideration, it is no longer surprising to find common people and scholars immensely loving and sympathizing with him in his woes.

### **2.6.6 The Issue of Divorce**

He came back to his hometown Damascus, where he was received warmly by the equally loving masses. Here he became more involved in writing about the Islamic jurisprudence. He targeted issues that were problematic. He realized that people had taken the word of divorce as a means of oath. They used to swear at their wives with the pronouncement of divorce. Failure to carry out the oath caused them losing their partners. Ordinary oaths were atoned with fasting three days, feeding ten indigents or liberating a slave. When it came to the kind of oath in vogue, (i.e., making oaths with words of divorce), no atonement was possible. The couple would be immediately separated. This double standard invoked his doubts concerning the validity of such decisions. He started digging up in the references for the opinions of the companions and their followers to crosscheck the resolutions reached by the majority of the scholars in his time. In this, he found that considering the legacy of the orthodox predecessors and the cumbersome situations people were put in due to the previous decisions, it was expedient or rather appropriate not to nullify a sacred bond such as marriage with slips and lapses and unintended divorces. He wrote invalidating such so-called divorces, proclaiming that those pronouncements should be treated simply as shere oaths.

This incited the opposition of the litigious rivals in office as well as the followers of the four schools. To suppress the fuss, the chief qāḍi advised Ibn Taymiyyah to stop publicizing that opinion. Therefore, the book was formally banned. This was in 718 AH. Then, Ibn Taymiyyah scrupled about hiding knowledge from people. He resumed



his disseminating it. He never hesitated to proclaim the truth even if that irritated the rulers and if the ruler was once his savior and supporter. He was summoned to attend the court where he was urged to refrain from that opinion which ‘rebelled’ against the four schools. Yet, he out of fear from none but the Great Ruler (Allah) did not cease to spread the truth he reached after ample research and investigation. Again, in 720 AH, he was summoned and reproached for his decision but they did not put the issue to debate for fear of his invincible arguments. Receiving no conceding response, they decided to send him to jail. For five months and eighteen days, he was in prison. Then in 721 AH he was released.

### **2.6.7 Visiting the Graves**

He continued writing, editing and adding to his books for a few years. In the meantime, the hearts of the diverse groups he had opposed were simmering with envy and abhorrence. Despite the various motives, these united and joined hands to curb the free scholar. To consolidate the attack they dug into his literature. A *fatwa* he issued seventeen years before seemed drastically serving the purpose of inciting the elites against him. They distorted the *fatwa* to mean that Ibn Taymiyyah prohibited visiting the graves including the gravesite of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). However, originally, he did not prohibit such visit. Rather, he prohibited initiating a travel to any gravesite however holy that might be. This comes in perfect conformity with the prophetic *ḥadīth*, where the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said initiating a travel is allowed to none but three mosques, his mosque, *Bait al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) and the Holy Mosque at Makkah. With reading this *fatwa* differently, they incited the court against him in 726 AH. He was detained without investigation.

In the prison, his brother was allowed to attend him. The enemies aimed at optimizing the chance by putting his students under incessant inquisition and detention. They were later released, however. Scholars with good faith were vigilantly observing the socio-religious change the innovators had created in the wake of his imprisonment. They appealed to the authorities not to help the enemies of Islam with the imprisonment of the supporter of the Sunnah. However, the imprisonment provided a good seclusion for the studious scholar to devote all his time without any interruption

to worship, especially at that old age, and to scrupulous research. He dedicated his time in answering and responding to the erroneous trends and false beliefs in fashion those days. His writings leaked out into the society with lightning speed. Now his enemies realizing that they needed more importantly to imprison his thought, they conspired to obtain a formal order to check his writing. All books in his possession, which mounted to sixty volumes and fourteen bundles, were carried along with all the writing utensils at his disposal to the grant bookstore in the town. He, unable to resist the urge of dispelling misconceptions and expounding the Islamic thought in its true perspective, used charcoal. He did not stay there for more than five months. Soon he was released to a wider and more beautiful life after an illness brought his life to end in 728 AH.

## **2.7 Death**

When he died in 728 AH in the citadel wherein he was imprisoned, men and then women came and recited the Quran beside his body, and then it was taken and washed. People flooded to the place seeking the blessings of seeing him. Then they held the funeral prayer at the citadel. The citadel and the way leading to the mosque were congested with people. The corpus arrived at noon at the mosque, which was already densely filled by people of all social strata. The funeral prayer was repeated after the noon prayer. People were in huge numbers, which even kept augmenting. The city allies and markets were too narrow to accommodate the sudden influx of people conveniently.

After that, the body was carried out on heads and fingers all stunned by the tragic event, weeping and sobbing. People while busy with looking at the coffin amidst the crowds lost their Turbans, handkerchiefs and shoes. The coffin was seen going back and forth due to the heated contest of people, every one wishing to participate in this honorable duty. All loved him except those envious few and some of the Sufis and Shia. The number multiplied as the people proceeded towards the cemetery. They had to stop at intervals due to the jam. They halted in one of the markets on the way to the cemetery to offer the funeral prayer for the third time. People would come in groups to offer the funeral prayer delaying the burial to be done shortly before the afternoon prayer (i.e., 'Aṣr). People

from the outskirts and villages came to witness the ceremony. Damascene people closed their shops. All except the physically challenged and the old attended. Those unable to witness were greatly sympathetic, and participated with their prayers. Women who attended the ceremony apart from those on the roofs all bewailing him were estimated to be fifteen thousand. Men were estimated to be one to two hundred thousand. People offered large amounts of money to buy his clothes. Many people read the whole Quran for him and frequented his grave in the wake of his burial. Many poets wrote eulogies lamenting his death and praising his character.<sup>65</sup>

## **2.8 Books**

As stated above and depending on the account of al-Ḍhahabī, who was an authentic authority being his student; Ibn Taymiyyah started writing books when he was nineteen. When he was twenty, he was already a great scholar whose books were circulating in the Muslim world. Historians differed on the number of the books he authored. Some said he left thousands of books; others curtailed the number to hundreds. Ibn Abdul-Hādī quoted al- Ḍhahabī as saying that the number reaches five hundred. Then the same quoted al- Ḍhahabī as stating that the books of Ibn Taymiyyah had at that time become over four thousands. Al-Siyūfī reported that to be three hundred.<sup>66</sup> Al- Ḥajawī said that his books were three hundred in five hundred volumes in addition to his *fatāwa* (pl. of *fatwa*, juristic verdicts) which mounted to three hundred<sup>67</sup> thus summing them up to be eight hundred. These are the accounts of his contemporaries and students. They were uncertain about the number of the books he wrote. Why was it difficult to exhaustively enumerate his books? This can be summarized thus<sup>68</sup>:

- People used to come to him from all parts of the Muslim world and enquire about matters of religion. He would sit, write, and give it to the man waiting for the answer. Sometimes he had a chance to have that redrafted. Sometimes he did not. Such being the case, many tracts or pamphlets and even books had disappeared.
- He was a prolific writer. He wrote very fast, citing, balancing evidences, attributing citations to their respective authors, judging the degree of the authenticity of *aḥādīth* and their narrators all from his memory, producing

such multitude of books but without any scheme of distribution or preservation.

- The official ban placed on his books for some periods and the confiscation of the same for some others. Those who had his books tried to hide them, either with them, or entrusted them to others, or sold them or gave them away. Moreover, some were even stolen or denied but, in fear of the authorities, none could claim them.
- His friends used to take some of his books. He would ask them to give them back for redrafting. Out of love for the possession of his books, they would not.
- He used to write, in some cases, without giving a title to that. His scribe or students used to give the title. Therefore, some books have more than one title, thus upsetting the calculation.
- He wrote a great number of books while in prison, where there was no one to make extra copies, and gave them away to acquaintances and strangers indiscriminately.

Nevertheless, his books achieved wide circulation. “Hardly had one come to a town, except that one would find his books thereat.”<sup>69</sup> The more intensely some attempted to confine his books, the wider the circulation they gained. The following reasons account for that:

- Allah supports him who works for His cause. Ibn Taymiyyah, as acknowledged by those who knew him in person, devoted his entire life for the defense of Islam and the rectification of the Muslims’ faith and practice.
- His very detention and the ban placed on his writings ensued adamant reaction from the sympathetic public.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, when the books forcibly got out of prison, they luckily became in the hands of the readers. Thus, they were instrumental in publicizing them.
- People felt his tender feeling towards them in all his affairs and his care for the welfare of the Muslims. They could observe his disinterested strife against the threats of the intrusive forces that jeopardized the land and mind in the Muslim World.

- His fame as an advocate of the *salafi* approach and as an indefatigable activist.
- His convincing argumentation and well-referenced polemics.
- His freedom from bigotry to any school of law; thus he was seen as a man for all.
- Anyone came for enquiry got his demand immediately. Ibn Taymiyyah did not need to consult references nor did he had any engagements to delay the answer. Even in his session in the mosque for teaching, he did not follow any particular syllabus. Rather, individuals would bring the issues for discussion, either in the form of oral questions or books for explanation, verification, etc. Therefore, he was nearer to the masses.
- In many cases, he wrote on demand. The receiver of the copy written was keen to keep and often to disseminate it too.

Now, it is in order, to have a cursory look into some of the books he wrote.

#### 1. *Kitāb al-Īmān*

In this book, Ibn Taymiyyah discussed the meaning of ‘*Īmān*’ and ‘*islām*’ as used in the Quran and *Sunnah*. He elaborated on the implications and invalidations of both and discussed the factions that went wrong in understanding these and the influence of that. The book was published in Amman, Jordan by Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī in one volume consisting of three hundred and seventy-nine pages, and edited by Muhammad Naṣiruddīn Al-Albāni. Yūsuf bin Ḥasan Ibn A-Mubarrid, (d. 909 AH) mentioned the book in his *Mu jam Al-Kutub*.

#### 2. *Fatwa al-Ḥamawiyyah al-Kubra*

In the year 698 AH, Some people came with questions from Hamah to Ibn Taymiyyah, enquiring about what the best position a Muslim should assume regarding the attributes of Allah. He referred them to another scholar. Again, the question came to him. In one session, in reply to the question, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote this book, wherein he discussed the attributes of Allah, rallying evidences from the Quran and *Sunnah* in support of his arguments. This spurred the animosity of those who viewed this affirmation as leading to anthropomorphism.<sup>71</sup> He proved that his was the approach of the companions and those who followed them. He pointed out the danger

and the implications of taking the attributes figuratively or negating them all together. He showed how indecisive those who adopted speculative or allegorical approaches had become due to their insufficiency.

The book was edited by Ḥamad bin Abdul-Muḥsin Al-Tuwajirī, and published in one volume by Dār Al-Ṣumy'ī (Riyadh), KSA in 2004. Muhammad bin Ṣāleḥ Al-'Uthaymīn commented on and abridged it into *Fath Babb al-Bariyyah Talkhīṣ Al-Ḥamawiyah* and Abu Zubair Abdul-Raḥmān Harrison translated this abridged version of the book

### 3. *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah fi Ta'sīs bida'ihim al-Kalāmiyyah*

It is a critical study of the speculative approaches of the Jahmites. Ibn Taymiyyah himself revealed the motivations behind the writing of this book. He said that when he wrote the answer for the questions that came from Hamah (see book no. 2 above); one of the best jurists raised some probing questions about that. Ibn Taymiyyah had to answer back. He answered in ten volumes. What made him extend discussion was that the people who produced these skeptical questions were not independent in their responses. Rather, they depended on the arguments of the followers of the Jahmites, mostly from those of Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Umar al-Rāzī. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah tried to show the deficiencies in his arguments and the Jahmites' method, in general.

The book was published (in ten volumes) in 1420 AH by the King Fahd Complex in Madīnah, KSA. Yūsuf bin Ḥasan Ibn A-Mubarrid, (d. 909 AH) mentioned the book in his *Muḥjam Al-Kutub*.

### 4. *Al-Akhnā'iyyah* or *al-Radd 'ala al-Akhnā'ī*

This book is a response to the the Maliki qāḍī, Muhammad bin Abu Bakr Al-Akhnā'ī. It is an attempt to elaborate on the question of travelling to the graves of the saints and messengers. Ibn Taymiyyah issued a fatwa to the effect that travelling to the graves of whosoever was prohibited in Islam. This created a commotion in the intelligentsia. Al-Akhnā'ī wrote a research on the topic proving the opposite. Al-Akhnā'ī abused Ibn Taymiyyah in this book, claimed that the mainstream scholars confirmed his own

conclusion and that Ibn Taymiyyah breached the consensus of the scholars. Ibn Taymiyyah authored this book and differentiated between the mere visiting of graves, which is commendable, and the initiation of travels to the graves, which the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) proscribed. Ibn Taymiyyah thought that the mistake that led the qāḍī to denounce his conclusion was due to obscuring this difference. The book discusses and refutes the evidences of the opponent, explained the *salaḥī* way of visiting the graves, denounced his claim of the scholars' confirmation but overlooked his invective.

The book was published in 1423 AH by Al-Maktabah Al-ʿAṣriyyah, Beirut, Lebanon and edited by Addānī bin Munīr Al-Zahawī. It consists of 253 pages.

#### 5. *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʿimmah al-Aʿlām*

It is about the respect and loyalty due to the religious scholars, especially the four imams. The difference between their decisions should not lead to any distrust in them. He justified their position, vindicated them from intentional deviations. He stated that they all agree on the absolute subordination to the Prophet and disclosed the secrets and reasons behind their disparity. He attributed their disagreement on some issues to the familiarity of each with the evidences relevant to the matter under discussion. For example, why they differ on a particular issue while the *Sunnah* is clear in that issue? Ibn Taymiyyah answered by stating three reasons for that: a) that particular *ḥadīth* did not reach that particular scholar, b) that he did not consider it authentic to act and judge by it, or c) that he thought the *ḥadīth* had been abrogated. He also elaborated on the other reasons that contribute to the difference in opinion. Yet, he declared that the scholars starting from the *ṣaḥābah* up to that time had knowledge that was short of exhausting every aspect in religion. Moreover, none apart from the prophets is infallible. Such being the case, unintentional mistake is inevitable. The difference of understanding the same thing is also an impetus that triggered difference or wrong judgment. He concluded by asserting the belief in all the Quran and *Sunnah* and warned against partial following.

The book was published in 89 pages in 1983 by the General Presidency of The Administrations of the scientific researches, Ifta, Daʿwah and Guidance, Riyadh,

KSA. Muhammad bin Ali al-Dawūdī mentioned this book in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssirīn*.

6. *Huqūq Ahl al-Bayt*

Literally translated, the title of this book would mean ‘the rights of the prophetic household’. He starts by elaborating on the merits that Allah had conferred on them. He also mentioned the special formal care that is due to them. Therefore, the fay’ (the warless spoil that the Muslims gained from their enemies) is partially the right of the household who were loyal and loving to the Prophet’s first-supporting companions (*Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār*). No one abhorring them is eligible to this right. He discussed the Shia’s abuse to the companions and stated that Ali and the companions were intimate friends; and even when Ali fought in the Battle of the Camel, he did not take prisoners, nor he killed them, nor took their property as spoil, nor did he chase any escaper, nor ended the life of the injured. Rather, he prayed for the dead of the two parties and said, “Our brothers did wrong to us.” Ignorance, Ibn Taymiyyah said, among other things made the Shia transgress the bounds of Sharia. The book in general is a smooth discussion with the Shia on the issues that caused them to part with the guidance of the Prophet and the companions including that of Ali too.

Dār Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, published this book in 69 pages. Abdul-Qādir ‘Aṭa edited it.

7. *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ al-‘Aql wa al-Naql*

The literal meaning of the book is ‘warding off the text-reason conflict’. The whole message Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to convey through the writing of this book is that reason and Sharia or religion can never be contradictory or conflicting. The general rule that innovators created, as he states from the very beginning, is that when reason and revelation contradict, reason should be given precedence. This is because reason is the base, upon which texts are situated. To depreciate reason is to depreciate both, because denouncing the base is denouncing what is thereon. Thus, they prove that reason should be placed first. Then they either interpret the text allegorically or suspend interpretation. Ibn Taymiyyah resolves the matter by saying that if two evidences seem contradictory, it is possible that they both bear clear-cut statement of



the matter under discussion (and in this case, they cannot be contradictory). It is also possible that they remotely point to that; or one may be of the former type and the other of the latter, (and here the one precisely relating is given precedence. He maintained that degrees of authenticity and relevance of the evidences of the issues under discussion should be taken as the criterion of weighing such evidences. Furthermore, He exposes the ways the innovators manipulated the texts, and according to that understood the doctrine and law erroneously. The book is a refutation of all the decisions made on the above stated rule and other related matters.

The book runs to ten volumes. Imam Muhammad bin Saud University published it in 1991. The book was edited by Muhammad Rashād Salīm. Şalaḥuddīn bin Aybak bin Abdullah al-Şafdī cited the book along with a good number of Ibn Taymiyyah's books in his *al-Wāfi Bil-Wafiyāt*.

#### 8. *Al-Tadmuriyyah*

Ibn Taymiyyah mentions at the beginning what forced him to write this book. It was a request from a man from Tadmur. The man, as Ibn Taymiyyah accounts, asked him to elaborate on Allah's attributes, Islamic concept of monotheism, Sharia and predestination. This is because these issues are of paramount importance and to know them is direly needed by any Muslim. Beside, many misunderstood these issues. This book, therefore, attempts to explicate aspects of monotheism, its implications and invalidations. As monotheism also means to devote worship to Allah, and as worship implies complete submission and complete love, then it is part of monotheism to believe in Allah's creation (including all incidents that take place in the world), and command (all that Allah ordered to be done or avoided). Under creation comes predestination and under command comes Sharia. This devotion in worship is the crux of the message of all prophets. The book also contains the areas of monotheism where the pioneers of speculative theology and the Sufis and some others erred. The book consists of 241 pages.

It was published by Maktabat Al-Obaikān, Riyadh, KSA, and edited by Muhammad bin Awdah Al-Saudī.

It is an epistle to the people of Wāṣiṭ. It is characterized by its lucidity and, unlike most of his books, went through thorough and tough official scrutiny, and debates were conducted between Ibn Taymiyyah and his professional opponents on this treatise. Whenever his doctrine was questioned, Ibn Taymiyyah used to refer them to it and further challenged them with giving them a three-year period to find out any inconsistency therein. This book is simply an elaboration and commentary on the six bases of faith (*īmān*), namely, belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His scriptures, His messengers, the Last Day and the *qadar* (good and bad predestined incidents). Under *īmān*, Allah's attributes and His nearness to pious people are discussed. The uncreatedness of the Quran and the beatific vision are also dealt with under the first four aspects. Under the Last Day, incidents that would take place in the hereafter are explored. The book also deals with the degrees of the people in their belief in predestination. The method and belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* is highlighted and the author demonstrates how they are middle between extremes in all aspects of religions.

The book was published by Aḍwā' Al-Salaf, Riyadh, KSA. The book runs to 71 pages. Ashraf Abdul-Maqṣūd edited the book. Many scholars particularly of the Arab countries explained and published this treatise. The book was translated into English by the Islamic research Department of Jamia Salafia, Banaras (India). Darussalam publications republished the book with amendments.

10. *Al-Nubuwwāt*

The book is a discussion of prophethood, characteristics of the prophets and their miracles. It deals with the prophets' endeavor, strife and triumph over the infidels of their communities. It sets a line of demarcation between the miracles of prophets and the extraordinary maneuvers of the acrobats and the sorcerers. It also deals with the concept of miracle adopted by the Ash'ari School and the pitfalls committed in the study of the miracles.

The book was published in two volumes by Adwa' Al-Salaf, Riyadh, KSA in 2000 AD. Abdul-'Aziz bin Saliḥ Al-Ṭuwayyān edited it and made an introductory study to the topic and a short biography of Ibn Taymiyyah at the beginning.

*11. Bughyat al-Murtād fi al-Radd 'ala al-Mutafalsifah wa al-Qarāmiṭah wa al-Bāṭiniyyah*

As the title reveals, the book is a response to the philosophers and Bāṭinis (see above). An enquiry into the authenticity of three *aḥādīth* spurred the writing of this book. The first indicates that the first thing that was created was the mind or intellect. The second shows that Allah was an unknown treasure, and then He liked to be recognized so He created His creation. The third states that Allah was but none was with Him and now He is as He was. The intention was to define the position of the issues derived from these *ḥadīths*, and which the factions identified in the title adopted. Citing the judgments of the early masters of *ḥadīth*, Ibn Taymiyyah ruled out the first as well as all *aḥādīth* to that effect as fabricated. Philosophers (including Ikhwān Al-Ṣafa, some of the Jahmites and those of the pantheists, who developed an inclination to philosophy) depended on these forged *aḥādīth* to justify the Aristotelian philosophy, which postulates that the first thing to emanate from the Necessary Existent was the first intellect. The book demonstrates and denounces the application of Islamic terms to mean alien concepts imported from non-Muslim thought. The philosophical thought was so appealing to some people in the Muslim lands that they strove to visualize the worldview postulated by the philosophers even though it undermines the very bases underpinning monotheism.

The book was published by Maktabat Al-'Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, Madīnah, KSA. It was edited by Mūsa Al-Duwīsh. It runs to 531 pages.

*12. Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*

The author states the reason that prompted the authorship of this book. He said that some people brought him a copy of a book entitled *Minhāj al-Karāmah fi Ma'rifat Al-Imāmah*, written by a rafīḍite called Ibn Al-Muṭahhar Al-Ḥillī for the king Khudabandeh. Al-Ḥillī in this book claimed that the imamate is the first prerequisite in Islam. He also tried to establish the preference of Ali to the other companions. In

doing so, he curses the companions, starting with the Prophet's own most beloved wife, 'Ā'ishah. In an attempt to decorate his ideology, he dispraises the people of *Sunnah* and attributes to them false statements they never said. Ibn Taymiyyah authored this book as a response to this Rafidites. The book, therefore, picks up statements of the author of *Minhāj Al-Karāmah* and refutes them.

The book, moreover, elaborates on the respect due to the companions and demonstrates the wickedness and ignorance of those who target the best of the Muslim community, especially those whom the Prophet had identified by name as people of paradise. Moreover, the author states two main reasons for this: the ignorance of Shia and their habit of telling lies to the extent that the *ḥadīth* specialists used to discredit their narrations. The book condemns the statement that imamate is the most honorable issue for the Muslims to know, the infallibility of the imams, the claim that their ideology is obligatory upon Muslims to follow, etc. The book demonstrates through quoting the Rafidites that he mainly depended upon obviously fabricated *aḥādīth*.

*Minhāj Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah* was published by Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in nine volumes in 1986. It was edited by Muhammad Rashād Sālim.

### *13. Al-Risālah al-Qubruṣiyyah*

Literally translated as the epistle to Cyprus, the book is a letter to the Cyprian sovereign appealing to him to deal kindly with Muslim prisoners in his custody and at the same time inviting him to Islam. The letter is an invitation to the king to faithfully and sincerely re-evaluate the Christian faith and to discard blind imitation. In the very beginning, the author highlights the purpose of the creation of the world and the monotheism-polytheism conflict throughout the ages. Then it discusses the succession of the prophets for the guidance of people to Allah, who supported them with miracles as signs of their veracity. A link in this chain of prophets was His slave Jesus, the man of the miraculous and immaculate birth. The letter proceeds to explicate the extremism and deviation of the Christians, their gimmicks, discrepancies and adulteration and distortion of the Bible, supporting that with historical, rational and scriptural evidences. It also shows how Islam is middle between the extremities of

the Christians and Jews. Ibn Taymiyyah then speaks of the tolerance of the Muslims, how he personally extricated the Christians from the tight grip of the Mongols, how kindly the Muslims treat the Christian prisoners and the early Muslim-Christian dialogue, initiated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He also speaks highly of the victories of the Muslims over their enemies, how they subdued armies many times their number, etc. The tone of the letter is amiable, diplomatic and compassionate.

The book was published by Maktabat al-Sayyid in 1979. It runs to 76 pages. It was edited by Ali Assayyid Şubḥ al-Madanī. Salaḥuddīn bin Aybak bin Abdullah al-Şafdī cited the book along with a good number of Ibn Taymiyyah's books in his *al-Wāfi bil-Wafiyāt*.

*14. Qa'idah 'Azīmah fī al-Farq bayn Ibādat Ahl al-Islām wa al-Īmān wa Ibādat Ahl al-Shirk wa al-Nifāq*

The title literally means a great rule in the difference between the worships of the people of faith and the worships of the people of polytheism and hypocrisy. It is a detailed discussion of the characteristics of sound worship. The book stipulates two conditions for worship to be acceptable: that it should be devoted solely to Allah and that it should be performed in the way He prescribed through His Prophet. Islam is the religion of all the prophets, but the law each brought from Allah was different. The companions of the Prophet followed him, disseminated his guidance to the people and were alert of any aspect of associationism (shirk). The true believers assumed their role. Then people who missed the prophetic guidance created many innovations. The book is an investigation into this phenomenon.

The book runs to 143 pages. It was published in 1997 by Dār Al-'Āşimah, Riyadh, KSA. It was edited by Sulaimān bin Şāliḥ Al-Ghoşn

*15. Al-Jawāb al-Şaḥīḥ Liman Baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ*

The title can be translated as 'the right answer to those who altered the religion of Christ'. It is a response to a letter that came from Europe in which the writer tried to prove through the Bible and the Quran that Christianity as it was at those times was

the true religion of Jesus Christ and that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent particularly to the Arabs. The response touched areas such as heresies created by the Christians, that the true religion of Jesus should not be different from that brought by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or any other prophet that Christianity has been abrogated by Islam and that Islam is a universal religion binding to all men and jinn. He supported his arguments by rational, philosophical, historical, biblical and Quranic evidences.

The book runs to six volumes. It was published in 1999 by Dār Al-‘Āshimah, Riyadh, KSA. It was edited by ‘Ali bin Ḥasan and others. Salaḥuddīn bin Aybak bin Abdullah Al-Ṣafḍī cited the book along with a good number of Ibn Taymiyyah’s books in his *al-Wāfi Bil-Wafiyāt*.

Due to the wide circulation and due to the vast number of his writings, biographers had different accounts of his books albeit with a good deal of overlap. Here I shall attempt to list titles along with the references where they are found. In cases where the same is mentioned in more than one place, I will attribute it to only one. It is noteworthy that some of the books were given what looked like headlines and not titles. This may be an instance where he did not give titles but people just phrased headlines indicating the content.

*Al-Īmān, Jawāb Al-I‘tirāḍāt Al-Miṣriyyah ‘ala Al-Fatāwa Al-Ḥamawiyyah, Talbīs Al-Jahmiyyah, Kitāb Al-Istiḳāmah, Kitāb Al-Miḥnah Al-Miṣriyyah, ‘Ibtāl Al-Kalām Al-Nafsānī* and *Al-Fatāwa Al-Misriyyah* are referred to in *Mu‘jam Al-Kutub*<sup>72</sup> and others.

*Al-Masā’l Al-Iskandarāniyyah, Al-Radd ‘Ala Al-Mantiq, Al-Radd ‘Ala Al-Falāsifah, Al-Risālah Al-Ṣafḍiyyah, Qā’idah fī Al-Qaḍāyā Al-Wahmiyyah, Qā’idah fī Mā Yatanāhā wa Mā lā Yatnāhā, Ithbāt Al-Ma’ād, Al-Radd ‘Ala Ibn Sīna, Naqḍ Qawl Al-Falāsifah, Mas’alat Ma Bayn Al-Lawḥayn Kalam Allah, Risālah ila Ahl Ṭobrustān, Qā’idah fī Al-Kulliyāt, , Naqḍ Qawl Al-Falāsifah, Qā’idah fī Al-Isti’ādḥah, and Qā’idah fī Qawlihī Ta’ālā Iyyāka Na’budu wa Iyyāka Nasta’in,* are referred to in *Al-Wāfi bil-Wafiyāt*<sup>73</sup>.

## *Chapter Two: The Life, Education and Books of Ibn Taymiyyah*

*Al-Şārim Al-Maslūl ‘ala Muntaqış Al-Rasūl, Tabṭīl Al-Taḥlīl, Iqtīda’ Al-Şirāṭ Al-Mustaqīm, Al-Radd ‘ala Ṭawā’if Al-Shī‘ah, Manāsik Al-Ḥajj, Kitāb Al-Taşawwuf, Al-Kalim Al-Ṭayyib and Al-Siyāsah Al-Shar‘iyyah* are mentioned in *Ṭabaqāt Al-Mufasssīrīn*.<sup>74</sup>

*Al-Ṭibāq wa Al-Ithbāt* is indicated in *Fahris Al-Fahāris wa Al-Athbāt wa Mu‘jam Al-Ma‘ājim wa al-Mashyakhāt wa Al-Musalsalāt*.<sup>75</sup>

*Al-Kaylaniyyah, Al-Baghdādiyyah, Al-Halawūniyyah, Al-Radd ‘ala Al-Manṭiq, Kitāb Faḍā‘il Al-Qurān, Al-Tuḥfah Al-Irāqiyyah fī Al-A‘māl Al-Qāliyyah, Masā’l fī Al-Ṭalāq, Al-Şafdiyyah, Al-Radd ‘ala Ahl Kisrwan, Al-Radd ‘ala Al-Bakri, Mas’alah fī Shadd Al-Riḥāl wa Qā‘dah fī Al-Maḥabbah* are stated in *Al-‘Uqūd Al-Duriyyah fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah*.<sup>76</sup>

In the previous sections, the way Ibn Taymiyyah followed in his debates with the different Muslim factions has become clear. He would often resort to the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad’s *Sunnah* in dealing with the various topics that caused the difference between him and the opponents. However, he never missed to use his common sense in his discussions. He established harmony between the religion and reason.

He was a man who lived the worries and fears of his nation. As one of the great intellectual references to whom people resorted in times of adversity; he was a compassionate scholar who vividly interacted with the vicissitudes that befell his community, and positively and actively participated in the protection of his nation from the intellectual and military invasion of the foreign hostile powers.

As part of his lifelong struggle for truth and protection of his community and Islamic ideals, he was overwhelmingly keen to rebut the falsifications made by the Christian clergy against Islam. Through hermeneutical travesties, they attempted to doctor Islamic texts to support their Trinitarian notions. He was motivated by a letter sent to the Muslim lands to establish their theology and align Islamic texts to testify to their allegations. In reaction, he made assiduous explication of the Christological belief the Christians tried to market inside the Muslim lands and provided convincing responses

thereto. In the following chapter, an attempt shall be made to discuss his answers to the notion of unity and indwelling, which they based on Trinitarian assumptions.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Bakr Abu Zaid, in his preface to *Al-Jami' li-Sīratihī* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1422 AH: Dār 'Ālām Al-Fawā'id, Makkah, KSA p. 15

<sup>2</sup> Taymiyyah was the title given to one of his grandfather (Muhammad Ibn Al-Khiḍr) . It was narrated that he had seen a girl at Taymā' and when he came back home his wife gave birth to a girl which he called Taymiyyah likening her to the girl he had seen at Taymā'. Then he was nicknamed Taymiyyah. Others believe that the nickname was given to the newborn girl.

<sup>3</sup> See Ibn Al-Wazīr Muhammad Bin Ibrāhīm: *Al-'Awāsim Wal-Qawāsim Fi Al-dhab 'An Sunnat Abil-Qāsim* (Al-Risālah, Beirut, 1994) edited and annotated by Shu'aib Al-Arna'ūṭ, vol.5, p. 262

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Bin Abdullah Al-Qaisi, a Shafiite scholar.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Abdul-Hādī, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad, *Al-'Uqūd Al-Duriyyah fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah*, edited by M. H. Al-Faqī (Dār Al-Kātib Al-'Arabi, Beirut) vol. 1, p.18

<sup>6</sup> Ibid vol.1 pp. 20-21

<sup>7</sup> Al-Bazzār, 'Omar bin Alī (d.749 AH), *Al-'Ālam Al-'Alīyah fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah*,(Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1400 AH), edited by Zuhair Ash-Shāwush p.20

<sup>8</sup> Bakr Abu Zaid, in his preface to *Al-Jami' li-Sīratihī*, pp. 18-20

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Abdul-Hādī, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad, *Ṭabaqāt 'Ulamā' Al-Hadīth*, (Mu'assasah Al-Risālah, Beirut, 1996), edited by Akram Al-Būshī and Ibrahim Al-Zaibaq, vol.4 pp. 281-282

<sup>10</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Huffāz*, Dārul-kutub Al-Ilmiyyah vol.4 p.192,

<sup>11</sup> See Abu Zahrah, *Ibn Taymiyyah, Huyātuhu Wa 'Aṣruhu*, Dār Al-Fikr Al-'Arabi, Cairo, 1991 p. 80

<sup>12</sup> See also Ibn Abdul-Hādī, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad, *Ṭabaqāt 'Ulamā' Al-Hadīth*, (Mu'assasat Al-Risalah, Beirut, 1996), edited by Akram Al-Būshī and Ibrahim Az-Zaibaq, vol.4 pp. 284-290

<sup>13</sup> Al-Bazzar, 'Omar bin Alī(d.749 AH), *Al-'Ālam Al-'Alīyah fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah*,(Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1400 AH), edited by Zuhair Al-Shāwush, pp 18-28

<sup>14</sup> Al- Al-Bazzār wrote in his , *Al-'Ālam Al-'Alīyah fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyyah* that he asked Ibn Taymiyyah about the reason why he comparatively wrote more on the Islamic faith (*Aqīdah*) and requested that he write on jurisprudence a book on his own selective opinions on juristic issues. Ibn Taymiyyah replied that matters of jurisprudence are less serious. If the Muslim imitates any reliable scholar, it is permissible. The faith, however, has been erroneously dealt with by the deviant factions such as the philosophers, the esoteric groups, the atheists, the pantheists, etc.

<sup>15</sup> For his sciences see also Al-'Omarī, Shihābuddīn Ahmad bin Yahya, *Masālik Al-Absār Fi Mamālik Al-Amṣār*,(Al-Mujamma' Al-Thaqafī, Abu Dhabi, 1423) vol.5 p. 696-7

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Al-Wazīr, vol. 5 p.264

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Jami' Al-Rasā'il*, editd by Azīz Shams, Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, 1422 AH



<sup>18</sup> Ibn Rajab (d. 795), *Dhail Ṭabaqāt Al-Hanābilah*, Maktabat al-Ubaikān, Riyadh, KSA, 2005, edited by Abdul-Rahman Al ‘Uthaymīn vol.4 p. 507

<sup>19</sup> Abu Zahrah, p. 84

<sup>20</sup> Al-Bazzār, pp. 45-46

<sup>21</sup> Khattabī, Dawūd Mahmoud Dusūqī, ‘*Awāmil Al-‘Abqariyyah ‘Ind Al-Imām Ibn Taymiyyah*, <http://www.alukah.net/Culture/0/23292/#ixzz2aBLSH6jG> accessed on 4/7/2010

<sup>22</sup> Al- Bazzār, p.70

<sup>23</sup> Al-‘Omarī vol.5, p.699

<sup>24</sup> Ṣalāhuddīn, Muhammad Bin Shākir Bin Ahmad Bin Abdul-Rahmān, *Fawāt Al-Wafīyyat*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, 1973 vol.1, p.75

<sup>25</sup> Ibn kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wal-Nihāyah*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1986 vol.14 p.54

<sup>26</sup> See Ibn Qayyim: *Madārij Al-Sālikīn*, Dār Al-Kitāb Al- ‘Arabi, Beirut 1.1996, edited by Muhammad Al-Mu’tasim Billah Al Baghdādī, vol. 2 p.328

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* vol. 2 p. 329

<sup>28</sup> Ibn kathīr vol. 14, p.70

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu‘ Al-Fatāwa*, King Fahd Complex, Madīnah, KSA edited by Abdul-Rahmān Bin Muhammad Qāsīm vol.3, p.271.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Tarīkh Al-Islam* Al-Maktabah Al-Tawqīfiyyah, vol.17 p.216

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmou‘ Al- Fatawa* vol. 5, p.555

<sup>32</sup> *Opcit.* vol. 30 p.93

<sup>33</sup> Shawkānī, *Al-Badr Al-Ṭāle’*, Dār al-Ma‘rifah, Beirut, 1250 AH vol. 1, p.115

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Fatāwa al-Kubra*, Dārul-kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut 1987 vol.6, p.662

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah , *Minhāj Al-Sunnah*, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, KSA, 1986, vol. 6, p.302

<sup>36</sup> *ibid* , vol.5 p.157

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dār’ Ta’arūḍ Al-‘Aql Wal- Naql*, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, vol.7, p.106

<sup>38</sup> See *Al-A ‘lām*, p.48

<sup>39</sup> See *Al- A ‘lām*, p.65

<sup>40</sup> See *Al-A ‘lam*, pp. 50-52.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn kathīr: *Al-Bidāyah Wal-Nihāyah*, 14/26

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Hajar, *Al-Durar Al-Kāminah*, Majlis Dā'iratul-Ma'ārif Al-Uthmāniyyah, India, 1972 2<sup>nd</sup> edition vol.1 p.177

<sup>43</sup> Al-'Aql, Nassir Bin Abdul-Karīm , *Sharh At-Tahawīyyah*, audio lessons written down by Ash-Shabakah Al-Islamiyyah, <http://www.islamweb.net>, the second lesson, accessed 15/08/2013

<sup>44</sup> The term 'Shia' here does not apply to those who simply favoured Ali to the rest of the companions. Rather, it refers to those who condemned most of the *Ṣaḥābah* as infidels.

<sup>45</sup> See *Al-Ibānah*, p. 20. It should be noted here that it took Abul-Hasan Al-Ash'arī some time to get rid of the Mutazilite traces in his thought. This book, being one of his late books, manifested almost total transfer. His followers dilated the difference between him and *Ahl Al-Hadīth* through clinging to his early persuasion.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimishqī (d. 571 AH) authored a book entitled *Tabyīn Kadhib Al-Muftari Fi Mā Nusiba Ilā Abi'l-Hasan Al-Ash'arī* (*Exposing the Fabricator's Lies Concerning What Has Been Attributed to Abu'l Hasan Al-Ash'arī*). In this, he highlighted some of the doctrines attributed wrongly to Abu'l Hasan Al- Ash'arī.

<sup>47</sup> Ibn Al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓim Fī Tarīkh Al-Mulūk Wal Umam* , Darul-kutub al-ilmiyyah, Beirut 1992, edited by M. Abdul-Qādir 'Atā and Mustafa Abdul-Qādir 'Atā, vol. 16 p.181

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Al-Fatāwa*, vol.3, p.228

<sup>49</sup> See his discussions of their doctrines in his *Talbīs Al-Jahmiyyah*

<sup>50</sup> Allah says, "And Allah created you and what you do" (Quran: 37:96)

<sup>51</sup> For the manners of revelation see Quran: 42:51.

<sup>52</sup> Allah says: "And if anyone of the polytheists seeks your protection, protect him so as to [let him] hear the *kalām* (speech or word) of Allah." (Quran: 9:6)

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah stated that Quran as letter and sound is Allah's word. The opponents mistakenly attributed to him the belief that Allah spoke with sound and letter. They also attributed to Imām Ahmad the belief that the readers' voice and the ink with which the Quran is written are eternal. In his book *Majmū' Al-Fatāwa* vol. 3, p. 170 he declares that it was a fabrication and said he collected the saying of Ahmad and showed that the imam never upheld that view.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtida' Al-Ṣirāt Al-Mustaqīm*, Dār Alamul-Kutub, Beirut, 1999, edited by Nassir Bin Abdulkarīm Al-'Aql. p. vol.2 p.392

<sup>55</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq Bayn Al-Firaq*, Dār Al-Āfāq Al-Jadīdah, Beirut, 1977, p. 279

<sup>56</sup> Ibid p. 269

<sup>57</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Al-Fatāwa*, vol. 4, p. 162

<sup>58</sup> Ibid vol.16, p.130

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah Wa al-Nihāyah*, vol.14, p.4

<sup>60</sup> ibid. vol. 14, p. 36

<sup>61</sup> Ibid vol. 14, p. 38

<sup>62</sup> Ibid vol. 14, p. 45

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Nadwī, Abul-Ḥasan, *Rijāl Al-fikr wa al-Da'wah*, translated by Sa'īd Al-A'zumī Al-Nadwī, Dārul-Qalam Damascus, 2002 p.102

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah Wa al- Nihāyah*, vol 14, pp.135-6

<sup>66</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Tabaqātul-Ḥuffāz*, p. 521

<sup>67</sup> Al-Ḥajawī, Muhammad bin Al-Ḥasan, *Al-Fikr Al-Sāmi*, Dārul-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1995. Vol.2, 434

<sup>68</sup> Abdul-Hādī mentioned some in his *Al- 'Uqūd*, pp. 80-81

<sup>69</sup> Abdul-Hādī, *Al- 'Uqūd* p. 23

<sup>70</sup> Al-Ḥajawī said that because of his trial, people liked his books, looked for them, publicized them, revived their content and followed its material, thus he became a leader and gained wide celebrity.

<sup>71</sup> Anthropomorphism used to be associated with the Ḥanbalites due to their affirmation of the attributes of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah in his book *Majmu' Al-Fatāwa* vol.3, p.197 exonerated imam Ahmad from this charge and affirmed that only a few of the followers of Ahmad viewed that whereas the pure Hanbalites never upheld this doctrine. Anthropomorphism was more observed in the non-Hanbalites, e.g., all the Kurds who were all Shafiites and who followed this doctrine more than any other people and the people of Jilān, and it was found in the Karramites who were all Hanafis.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn Al-Mubarrid, Yūsuf bin Ḥasan (d.909) Maktabat Ibn Sīna for publication and distribution, edited by Yusra Abdul-Ghanī Al-Bishrī, p. 116

<sup>73</sup> Al-Ṣafḍī, khalīl Aybak (d. 764 AH), Dār Iḥya' Al-Turāth, 2000, edited by Ahmad Al-Arna'ūt and Turki Muṣṭafa.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Dāwūdī, Muhammad bin Ali (954 AH) Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon

<sup>75</sup> Al-Kattānī, Muhammad Abdul-Ḥayy (d.482 AH), Dār Al-Gharb Al-Islāmī, Beirut, Lebanon, vol. 1, p. 275

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Abdul-Hādī, Shamsuddīn Muhammad bin Ahmad (d.744 AD), Dār al-Kitāb Al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, edited by Muhammad Hāmid al-Faqī



CHAPTER THREE

*Christ in the Writings*

*Of*

*Ibn Taymiyyah*



### **3 CHRIST IN THE WRITINGS OF IBN TAYMIYYAH**

Christianity has become a Christocentric religion, wherein Christ is the focal point of discussion. Rather, most of the innovations took place due to the different understanding of the nature and status of Christ. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to Ibn Taymiyyah's discussions on Christ.

#### **3.1 λόγος (Logos)**

The Greek translation of the Bible introduced some Greek words into Christianity along with their cultural connotations. The Greek word transliterated as 'logos' contributed greatly in creating much hermeneutical controversy. We first have to understand that the term has many meanings: a word (being the expression of a thought or reasoning; a saying), speech, discourse, communication, divine utterance, analogy. As regards to God, it means decree, mandate and order. The *logos* is a common term (used 330 times in the New Testament) with regards to a person sharing a message.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in pre-Christian Judaism, wisdom, word, and, for that matter, spirit was near alternatives as ways of describing the active, immanent power of God. In the Old Testament, "the word of God" repeatedly denotes the revelation of God and the divine will. In Hellenistic Judaism, the Law of Moses had been identified with wisdom.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the *logos* may refer to the act of speaking, as in *James: 3:2-3* or the faculty and skill of speaking, as in *Ephesians: 6:19-20*. When it is attributed to God, it may mean revelation as in *John: 10:35*.

This leads to the fact that *logos* was used to cover the whole speech process and skill. The word *logos* may refer to any of the stages of speaking: either as the power of speaking, or as the collection of thoughts and ideas (foreknowledge), or as the words spoken, received or enacted. With reference to biblical use it also means what God says to His elected people (prophets and messengers, who in turn conveyed the same to His servants),<sup>3</sup> and their prophecies<sup>4</sup> and God's command which is naturally manifest through revelation.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, however, the person who received the 'word' and acted and preached according to it is made its referent. We in our ordinary language refer to some people as being the incarnate of abstract qualities. This

personification is seen also in the Old Testament, wherein wisdom (which is identified with the law) is personified as a 'lady'.<sup>6</sup> This is clearly a figurative use. Ibn Taymiyyah is completely aware of the diversity and of the wide coverage of the term, and therefore constantly urges the Christians to opt one meaning for the use in explicating their dogma instead of having many meanings.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the statement in *John*: 1:1 which does not consider Christ and *logos* as one or rather does not mention Jesus is equivocal. Nevertheless, what John said in other places should be considered. In other verses, he differentiates between the Christ and the word of God (*logos*)<sup>8</sup>. See for example: *John*: 10:35 and *Revelation*: 1:9. Therefore, it could be said that the word of God is His revelation to His selected prophets one of which was Christ.

However, in Christian dogma, the *logos* is Jesus, who is therefore believed to have existed before all ages. Being the *logos*, he is the creator of everything. This Greek term has been the main reason for deifying Christ; since the word of God is eternal, comes from God, and considered as the God's faculty of speech, wisdom or foreknowledge, it is identifiable with Him. All these attributes are identified with Christ because of a cultural conflation. The Nicene Creed describes Jesus as being '*homooúsios*' with God the Father, meaning consubstantial, or of the same essence/substance as the Father. The concept of consubstantiality (and likewise co-eternality) of three principles had no traces in the post apostolic literature. The Holy Spirit as a person is not traceable either. The Bible is replete with references wherein God is portrayed as a transcendent being that is clearly distinct from the world including Christ. The main difference is accentuated through the various meanings an allegorical statement can accommodate. The personification of impersonal things especially the *logos* occasioned the point of departure from the monotheistic principles that divine religions are pivoted on.

Thus, the Son is referred to as the Word of God, as described traditionally to be the *logos*. Discussed rationally, it appears to Ibn Taymiyyah as a mysterious hybrid. *λόγος* (*Logos*) has many meanings. The various understandings of the *logos* and its relation with God brought many themes into light. Is God immanent or transcendent? Is He in

need to assign intermediaries between him and the corporal world? Are the personified beings identified with God form a hierarchy or unity? What is the meaning of the triadic formulas in the Christian literature? Many theories were produced, because it was a Greek word used to connote different meanings in different contexts. Apart from this are the cultural and political circumstances that Christianity suffered and survived although not unaffected.

Having a monotheistic mindset, Ibn Taymiyyah could not reconcile Nicene concept of Godhead and monotheism. Furthermore, he found the Christian concept of Trinity is, from the ontological and rational point of view, unpalatable. In his analysis of the concept, he picks up the 'Word' element in the picture, whereby he seeks to identify the identity of the word to make a judgment accordingly. The word, he noted, can be God, His attribute or both. If no one of these is possible, then it must be a being distinct from God. If it was God Himself, or both God and His attribute, then it would be the Creator of the world, (who is the Father). However, the Christians believe that the Father is not the Christ. Moreover, if the word was an attribute of God, then it could not be the creator, whereas, according to the Christian theology, the Christ is the creating word of God. Further, an attribute of God inheres in Him and does not detach itself to unite with or dwell in another such as a human being/form. Nor does the self or the substance ever exist stripped of its attributes. Therefore, Allah exists with His attributes, which do not constitute/possess a superfluous or extra identity. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that there is no being in the universe without attributes, although he admits that there is a difference between the existences of the two.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, it is absurd to say that the attribute deserves to be worshipped. The Christians propound that the Word of God is worshipped along with Him. They dedicated the first ecumenical council to defining the nature of Christ and asserted that he was God. Christ, they further elaborate, is the speaker among the Prophets. They also call him the creating word of God<sup>10</sup>, who would descend at the end of time and judge between people<sup>11</sup>. He will also forgive people who had faith in him. The word of God, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, cannot create, forgive sins or judge between people just because it is an attribute exactly like mercy, ability, etc., which do not



constitute separate entities. No one prays any of God's attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah reiterates the query whether the word of God, which appeared in Jesus, is God's speaking attribute (i.e. the capacity to speak) or the speaking self? If it means God's spoken word, then it can mean either of two meanings: first, it means the revelation that the Prophet Jesus received, which is true. Second, if it means that God's word, which is His attribute, detached itself from Him<sup>12</sup>, descended and united with Jesus, then this is not true. Ibn Taymiyyah generalizes that nothing that is detached from God can be an attribute of Him, let alone being a creator. He tells us that the mistake of the Christians is three fold: one, because they made the son and the Holy Spirit as the attribute of God; second, they made that attribute a creator; and third, when they believed that the attribute united with a human and that human is the creator of the heavens and the earth. He states that the error in the indwelling is a triple error beside their errors in the Trinity, wherein they secluded three attributes apart from God's various attributes to be independent substances forming the triune God. Thus, in both places, the error is triple.

## **3.2 The Trinity**

The doctrine of trinity has been the focal point in Christianity. many debates have been carried out due to this incomprehensible dogma. Moreover, the Muslim-Christian debates concentrated on it. Here the meaning and implications of this doctrine are briefly dealt with.

### **3.2.1 Definition and Difference**

The Catholic Encyclopedia asserts, "In scripture there is as yet no single term by which the three divine persons are denoted together"<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, in the writings of the early Christians, it is not used neither as a term nor as an agreed upon meaning denoting a triune god comprised of consubstantial coeternal persons, as this meaning first appeared in the fourth century. As for the meaning of Trinity, it is according to Advanced Learners Dictionary, "the existence of one God in three forms, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"<sup>14</sup>. According to Easton dictionary of biblical terms, the Trinity is:

“[A] word not found in Scripture, but used to express the doctrine of the unity of God as subsisting in three distinct Persons. This word is derived from the Gr[reek] . trias, first used by Theophilus (A.D. 168-183), or from the Lat. trinitas, first used by Tertullian (A.D. 220), to express this doctrine.<sup>15</sup> The propositions involved in the doctrine are these: 1. That God is one, and that there is but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30). 2. That the Father is a distinct divine Person (hypostasis, subsistentia, persona, suppositum intellectuale), distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit. 3. That Jesus Christ was truly God, and yet was a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit. 4. That the Holy Spirit is also a distinct divine Person.<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted however that those who coined or used the term, speak of three persons in one, being equal in divinity. To Theophilus, the trinity refers to God, His word (*logos*) and His wisdom (*Sophia*). To Tertullian, it refers to God, His Reason and His word as an expression of that reason. He thinks of the son as second in position. Even in later eras after the canonization of the Trinitarian creed in 325 CE, difference in meanings continued and many opinions emerged. Maulana Taqi Othmānī wrote:

“In elucidating and interpreting the doctrine, however, the views of the Christian scholars themselves are so divided and contradictory that it is extremely difficult to arrive with certainty at one conclusion...some say that it is the totality of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit. Others are of the view that the Father, the son and the Virgin Mary are the three persons whose unity represents the God... One group is of the opinion that each of three per se is God just as the whole is God. Another group is of the view that each of the three separately is God but when compared to the whole each has a lesser status, and the word ‘God’ has been used for each in a slightly wider sense. The third group is of the opinion that each of the three is not God, but that God is only the whole (trinity).”<sup>17</sup>

### **3.2.2 Meaning of the Hypostases**

This Greek term has had many meanings and dimensions. Greek philosophers, who were the natives of the term, differed concerning its meaning diametrically. Therefore having a cursory look into the meaning is pertinent here.

“The word hypostasis (Greek *ὑπόστασις*) means underlying state or underlying substance, and is the fundamental reality that supports all else... Neoplatonists argue that beneath the surface phenomena that present themselves to our senses are three higher spiritual principles or hypostases, each one more sublime than the preceding.... Plotinus taught that God exists in Three Hypostases, The One, The Divine Mind and The Word-Soul. In the Christian Scriptures this seems roughly its meaning at *Hebrews* 1:3. Allied to this was its use for "basis" or

"foundation" and hence also "confidence," e.g., in *Hebrews* 3:14 and 11:1 and 2 *Corinthians* 9:4 and 11:17."<sup>18</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah posits that the word ‘*uqnūm*’ (*ὀνόματα* or hypostasis) is mentioned nowhere in the divine books that are available at the disposal of the Christians. The Disciples of Christ never used it either. Then, it is an invented term, which is said to have a Roman origin, denoting ‘the origin’ and sometimes has other meanings too. Therefore, the Christians differ about the meaning of this word as it is from a foreign language. Sometimes they say that the meaning is persons; sometimes qualities; some other times attributes and sometimes essences (*jawāhir*, pl. of *jawhar*). Others, however, make the term more inclusive to enshrine the accidents as well as the essence.<sup>19</sup> They further say that the term refers to the essence with any of its properites.

The essential attributes forming the hypostases (along with the essence) are believed by the Christians to be consubstantial unlike the other subordinate attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah tells them that if this means that they are essences it becomes clearly incredible and no sane man would uphold it. If they differentiate between the different attributes, and on the bases of that, they make some attributes to participate in the formation along with the essences and place them on the same footing as the essences, this is wrong on the following grounds:

- Believing that attributes are of two categories: some coessential and others are accidental is in the sight of all faiths false.
- The Christians say that every existing thing has a mental concept representing an existence different from its existence in the outer world. Ibn Taymiyyah admits it is true that what we conceptualize in the mind is necessarily different from the thing available in the outer world. In the mind, we simply have an idea. Nevertheless, the question he poses is that whether the resultant in the outer world is one or two.

Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to explain the meaning using his knowledge of the Bible, the Quran and his mental power. From the Quranic perspective, the Holy Spirit refers to

the Archangel Gabriel, who brings down revelation to the prophets.<sup>20</sup> In the Quran, it, besides referring to the agent of revelation, also refers to the revelation *per se*, and therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that the Christ was supported with both, as they are co-related.<sup>21</sup>

The Holy Spirit in the prophetic terminology is the moral and spiritual support that Allah confers on whom He wills of the righteous including the prophets. Furthermore, it refers to the light, guidance, revelation and the angels that descend to the aid of the people of God. Ibn Taymiyyah gives scriptural evidences in support of his opinion, some of which are as follows:

- The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded Ḥassān bin Thābit (the poet companion) to defend him by poetry, saying, “Verily the holy spirit is with you as long as you defend His Prophet.” and prayed for him saying: “O Allah! Support him with the holy spirit.”
- The Quranic verse, “For such, He has written faith in their hearts and supported them with a spirit from Him.”(Quran: 59:22)<sup>22</sup>

As such, the Holy Spirit is not a person in the Trinity or something with which only Christ was honored or identified. The Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah states, consider the Holy Spirit to mean both the support stated above as well as the life and ability of God.<sup>23</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the Christians should concede either that the Holy Spirit in other people is not the life of God, or that it is the same in all people. If they agree on the latter, then similarly, the Holy Spirit is in all those who are said in the Bible to have it. Many people are stated in the Bible to have the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup>

### **3.2.3 The Biblical Evidences**

Through his reading of the literature on Christianity and the letter he received, Ibn Taymiyyah learned that the Christians depend on certain texts in their scripture to substantiate their claims. Here he tries to answer such claims. In the following paragraphs, these will be considered separately along with the answers Ibn Taymiyyah strived to provide.

The first quotation Ibn Taymiyyah gives is one he attributed to *Genesis*, the first book of the Torah. There he quotes that when God had willed to create Adam, said: let us make a creature in our likeness in our image. Ibn Taymiyyah mentions that some translate the verse to ‘let us make a man ...’ He must be referring to this verse: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”<sup>25</sup> the Christians believe, Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘God’ here means His spirit and His word. Further, he attributes to the Christians that they said that God said, “Adam has become as one of us”, insinuating at his wish when he ate the tree and became naked. This quotation is mentioned in the Bible currently held by the Christians today thus: “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”<sup>26</sup> The Christians also give the following verse as evidence for the Trinity as Ibn Taymiyyah quotes them: “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven”<sup>27</sup>. The repetition of the word ‘lord’ signifies the lordship of the son. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following:

- Nothing is like Allah.<sup>28</sup>
- The Christ is not mentioned by name. It is open to all men.
- If by His spirit, they mean His life or knowledge which are God’s attributes, the attribute cannot be like the person it subsists in. If they mean something else then this must be created and the creature can never be like the creator.
- The word ‘make’ in the verse makes it clear that the being that is made is a created being, whereas Christ in their sight is a creator.
- Likeness is not identicalness. Two things can be similar in some aspects but not necessarily identical. There is only a common area between them. The other features are different. After all, the phrase is not an evidence for the three persons in any way.
- Practically, many different things may come under the same name though they are completely different just as in the case of colors. They share the name ‘color’ but obviously, the black is not like the white. Therefore, the name may be the same but realities are different.

- Since he is created ('let us *make* man') he cannot be the Christ in his divinity. The verse cannot mean His spirit or word. It refers to a created being over which Christ in his humanity possesses no merit.
- The verse mentions Adam not Christ.<sup>29</sup>
- The plurality of the pronoun in the text does not mean multiplicity of persons. In many languages, the plural can refer to great sovereignties that have men and supporters under their command. As God created everything, He will not have anyone as His equal.

The second verse the Christians take to testify to the divinity of both the Father and the son, namely, "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven"<sup>30</sup>. The texts mention two lords. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the following answers:

- To call God's life or knowledge son or lord is wrong. Moses never in the Torah named any of such attributes son or lord.
- The one who provides rain is naturally the one who has it with him. He would not provide rain while it is with another. Christ does not have the rain.
- The attribute is dependent on something else. It cannot have independent actions.<sup>31</sup>
- It is acceptable in language to repeat the same noun instead of using the pronoun in the second case. It is like saying the Lord rained from what He possesses.

In addition, the Christians rely upon this verse in their affirmation of the Trinitarian doctrine: "Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."<sup>32</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following:

- The Christians claim that the repetition of the word *God* here refers to the three persons, although they do not believe in three gods. Moreover, this verse does not have any indication to the Trinity. Rather, it affirms only one God.
- Believing in a god who is worshipped by Abram, Jacob and Isaac does not prove the existence of three persons.

He, further, noted that the Christians interpreted the speech of prophets wrongly to suit their desires. For example, they interpreted the ‘son’ mentioned in their scripture to mean the word, while from the point of the language, they are two different utterances. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah elaborates, the word *son* in the language of their scriptures applies only to anyone happened to grow under the care of God; in other words, to created beings. It is a title said to be conferred on many righteous people such as the apostles and people of Israel as in “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”<sup>33</sup> These who are said to be the sons of God are not believed to be divine and did not become incarnate, why then the Christ? This tells us, Ibn Taymiyyah rightly observes, that the title son of God refers to humans only.

#### **3.2.4 Trinity: A Concoction**

The Christians think that what they believe is firmly grounded on prophetic traditions and biblical references. Therefore, they think that no one has any right to question this belief. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following manner.

- The Christians say in plain language that Jesus is a coeternal true God from a true God from the essence of his father and that Christ is coequal. They claim that he created and was not created but born of the Father before all ages. They also proclaim that the Holy Spirit is worshipped and glorified. The adjective ‘consubstantial’ tells the reader that Christ is another essence and the statement that the Holy Spirit is worshipped tells that he is an independent God. Therefore, they believe in three gods.<sup>34</sup>
- Ibn Taymiyyah criticizes the Christians for their claim that God is one with three attributes, forming the hypostases. He asserts that Allah is one with many attributes. To make them only three is not right. Even a numerical examination would prove the Trinity false. This is because to the Christians the Father is an essence with two attributes: life and knowledge, which make the persons two not three. Therefore, he becomes a god with three persons. Nevertheless, God’s attributes are not only three.

- They differ in the meaning of the persons. The Holy Spirit for example is interpreted as power, life and sometimes as existence. The word is taken to mean the wisdom, knowledge and sometimes as speech.<sup>35</sup>
- There can be many parts comprising a whole but these constituent parts cannot be the same. They are necessarily different. In the case of the Trinity of the Christians, however, the persons are all one. Yet, they believe that God is indivisible.
- The divine scriptures are all unanimous that God is one and that there is no god beside Him. He is the only god worthy of worship. There are no references to the incarnation or indwelling neither plainly stated nor potentially meant in any of the divine scriptures. Only a few texts may be interpreted to mean some of what the Christians believe. Thus they left the categorical in favor of the allegorical, which is too insignificant beside the categorically stated texts that command the worship of one and forbid the worship of any beside Allah. Otherwise, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that once there is a divine text no one has the freedom to choose another meaning.<sup>36</sup>
- They curse those who deny the divinity and the coessentiality of Christ. They also curse those who say that Christ did not sit to the right of his Father or that the Holy Spirit is not a god and those who deny triune unity. They also curse those who say that Christ is the Father. So, they curse him who say that he is the creating Father and him who says that he is not the creator. He who affirms one and denies three is wrong and he who affirms three and denies one. Thus, the truth as well as falsehood is negated. This, Ibn Taymiyyah affirms, is sheer contradiction.<sup>37</sup>
- The three sects, the Nestorians, the Melkites and Jacobites curse one another. Moreover, the Milkites and the Jacobites curse those who deny that Mary gave birth to God.<sup>38</sup> They affirm that she gave birth to a fully human and fully divine being. The Milkites and the Nestorians curse those who affirm that they both [the Father and the son] are one essence (*homosious*) with one will<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, the Christian sects parts of which are these are all different in their understanding of the Trinity and the incarnation. They uphold self-



contradictory notions. For example, some believe that Mary is the wife of God and some make her a god. Some consider the Christ the physical son of Allah, and so on.<sup>40</sup>

The Christians adamantly claim that they follow the Torah as well as the divine books in their creed. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following:

- The books contain abundant evidences affirming the oneness of God. In no one of them is there any mention of the Trinity, the hypostases, the indwelling or the incarnation or the assertion that he was a true God from a true God; nor is there any mention of the attributes of Allah as being His son, god or lord.<sup>41</sup> Rather, these doctrines are clearly opposed and confronted in these books. The names of the supposed persons are not mentioned in their books. Ibn Taymiyyah declares that if the Christ said this they should ascertain as to the meaning he intended. The Christians should examine the language he used to speak, and the way he used to convey his intents. However, it is clear that the meanings of the persons are entirely invented. If the meaning in the Bible is earnestly sought, it would contradict the meaning they concocted. For example, the meaning of 'son' is clear that it means anyone brought up by the grace of God under His protection, which applies to the creatures only. Israel, David<sup>42</sup> and the apostles and many more are called the sons of God in the Bible.<sup>43</sup>
- At the same time however, they unanimously admit their creeds were determined by the church fathers in the ecumenical councils, the first of which was during the time of Constantine in 325 CE, wherein they made the creed the Christians today believe and wholeheartedly follow. It is not something they received through the prophets.<sup>44</sup> They incrementally developed and fashioned them to be in line with the divinity of Christ.

Ibn Taymiyyah gives a full account of the ecumenical councils in order to show that they took for granted what those councils brought forth. Throughout his discourse, Ibn Taymiyyah posits that the Christians came to the already distorted scripture and understood it all differently from the message the prophets of God brought, namely

monotheism. They followed enigmatic statements and left the clear-cut ones all because they are not willing to concede the divinity of Christ, thus bringing forth a syncretism of true religion and Hellenistic paganism.

### **3.3 The Principle of Incarnation**

The doctrine of incarnation is not postulated exclusively in Christianity. Rather, it is a traditional doctrine in other faiths, too, which signified for some researchers to be imported from pagan faiths. Nevertheless, our discussion will be confined to how it is perceived in the Christian faith, and how Ibn Taymiyyah struggled to rebut it and repudiate it as rationally and theologically untenable, since it is a stark contradiction against the concept of *tawhīd*. Although this doctrine blurs the God- man distinction, the Christians upheld it tenaciously.

It is the central Christological issue that bewildered humanity not on the bases of its metaphysical or supernatural implications and complications but on the bases of its syncretism and patent discrepancy. There were myriads of people who raised voices against it, including people in the Christian faith.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the pioneer scholars, in their endeavor to disambiguate it, produced various interpretive approaches that unfortunately fell too short of serving the purpose. Their scriptural and rational evidences prove the opposite. The best plausible solution is not conclusive. In addition, as it is the case with many Christian doctrines, the texts they provide are either twisted to mean what they believe, or are pointing to the opposite. Therefore, their *ex post facto* rationalizations represented the springboard from which Ibn Taymiyyah used to launch his critique against their doctrines.

The doctrine of incarnation in Christian theology refers to the supposed embodiment of God the son in human form as Jesus Christ, so as to fulfill the law, atone for the sins of humanity and save them by sacrificing himself. The incarnation, according to the Christians, took place through the Holy Spirit. After this common ground for many Christians, various Christologies were propounded by the different Christian churches.

### **3.4 Christian Rationalization of the *Mixing*<sup>46</sup>**

It is stipulated in the fourth ecumenical council (451 AD) that Christ is both divine and human, without confusion, without change, without division and without separation. It is mandatory for Christians to believe in it. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes a Christian historian's<sup>47</sup> classification of mixing. This Melkite historian (al-Ḥasan bin Baṭrīq) said that *mixing* is of the following types:

The first: the mixture of two concrete natures and their change, such as the mixture of the wine and water; Second: the mixture with distinction as in the case of oil and water in one pot or flux and silk, wherein each preserves its distinct existence in the other. The historian as is quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah observed that the two types of mixing could happen only in the concrete materials. He proclaimed that change happens here and each material changes when it unites with the other, and the ensuing mixture is a matter that has the characteristics of both but not of any one of them in its pure form as in the case of copper and gold. Ibn Baṭrīq, being a Melkite, said that the Nestorians fell in error when they described the unification of the human and the divine in Christ as the unification of two persons. He said that this unification implies change, which entails corruption. They, with this blasphemous proposition, attributed to God to suffer death and calamities. The third type of mixture, presented by the Christian apologist is the mixture wherein it is only a mere indwelling free from change, separation or corruption. This is a kind of penetration of the spiritual nature into the material earthly nature, in which the former permeates throughout the latter, thus occupying every single space of the material nature again without any change or corruption for either of the two natures. This type of mixture like that which occurs between the soul and the body, or the fire and the iron, where the two become one firebrand subsisting in the fire nature but mixing with the nature of the iron without separation or discontinuity, transfiguration or corruption. On the bases of this mode of mixture, the divine creating word managed to mix with the human nature. This is the claim of the Christian apologist.

Ibn Taymiyyah objects to the way the Christian historian tried to differentiate between the two types of mixture where he confirmed a change or transfiguration in one of the

cases but negated it in the others. Ibn Taymiyyah states that if change is admitted in the case of the mixture between the two material things, then it is equally possible in the case of the mixture of the spiritual and the material.<sup>48</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that the evidences the opponent presented are directly opposing this argument. Ibn Taymiyyah tries always to turn the table against his adversaries in debate. Rather, he standardizes the practice and thinks that it is a general rule that whatever proofs the deviants offer can always be turned against them. The following examples demonstrate this.

### **3.5 The Christian Illustration**

To explain the incarnation to those who do not subscribe to it, the Christians provided many illustrative explanations in an attempt to demystify it. Here an attempt is made to enumerate the examples that Ibn Taymiyyah mentions and the way he exposed the falsifications thereof.

1. The water and the container: when the water is in the container taking its shape, neither the water nor the container loses its properties. Similarly, the word of God dwelled in the body but each retained its qualities. Ibn Taymiyyah shows the differences between the doctrinal implications of the incarnation and the example they gave to draw analogy between the two:
  - It implies that the divine is in need of the human just in the same way the water needs the container
  - It is sheer indwelling and there is no sense of unity, as the water does not pervade the container's body.
  - The elements remained separated, whereas the doctrine supposes that they are united.
2. Another example is the example of the tree wherefrom God spoke to Moses. The Christians affirmed that as God dwelled in the tree to talk to Moses, He similarly dwelled in Christ to talk to people. Ibn Taymiyyah brings into light the fact that the sound that was heard from the tree was not of the tree, whereas the sound that was heard from the body was Christ's. Christ before

and after unification spoke the same sound and people who knew him did not notice any difference. Therefore, it is clearly his, not God's.

Furthermore, when God spoke to Moses from the tree the voice heard was diametrically different from the voices people were accustomed to hear. Therefore, the voice was so difficult for the people to capture that they asked Moses to spell it out for them. This is a biblical truth. Ibn Taymiyyah reported that according to the Christians, Christ united with God from the beginning<sup>49</sup> of his formation and continued to unite until his ascension and sitting to the right of his Father.

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah denies any analogy between the incarnation and speaking from the tree, which is used by the Christians to justify union. Ibn Taymiyyah tells us that people unanimously agree that God did not dwell in the tree nor did He unite with it. Rather, He said, "I am God beside whom there is no God so worship me and establish prayer at my remembrance."<sup>50</sup> God spoke in the first person, ordering Moses to worship him. All that He spoke was of the same kind. However, in the case of Christ, God did not speak to people in this manner. Christ used to differentiate between himself and the Father.

Secondly, God speaking to Moses from the tree is very much the same as his descent from the heavens, or his descent on the Day of Judgment to judge between people. However, unification with humans is rationally impossible besides being not stated by any of the prophets. Moreover, they, Ibn Taymiyyah proceeds, claim that the unifying element took Jesus as a barrier, a place to dwell in and speak to people through. At the same time, they claim that the Father did not unite with nor dwell in Jesus. This entails that a part of the Father united with Jesus and the other part did not. The Father did not unite but the son did unite. This is in plain contradiction to the principle of the indivisibility of God.

3. They also gave the example of the log of wood or rod of iron and fire. They stated that the incarnation in human form is very much like the unity of fire and the wood or iron. There is unity of two different yet distinct elements.

Ibn Taymiyyah pointed out the differences between their doctrine and the example wherewith they tried to support their claim. The fire in the burning wood does not exist outside the wood and then united with it. Rather, the wood turns into fire due to the contact with it. The fire manifested in the wood was the result of that source fire not the fire proper. Moreover, if that is hit, the hitting occurs on the fire too. If this example were sound enough, it would imply that hitting or beating before or after crucifixion could have been inflicted on the divine character, which is plain blasphemy. To give another aspect of the invalidity of the example they gave, Ibn Taymiyyah tells them that any object be it animate or inanimate when put in fire changes diametrically. Similarly, the human body or anything else, when put in fire, sometimes melts and sometimes burns; and the fire after burning or dissolving it, changes too. In addition, there can be many objects near the fire; the heat that one object gets is not the same heat that the others get. If the Christians liken God and the speaking word to the fire and its light or heat, then, to believe that the word of God united with some of His creation entails multiplicity. Moreover, if the burning iron is put in water or beaten, these happen to both of them. This means that the beating, crucifixion, the spitting, the worship, the prayer, the eating, the drinking, etc. all happened to the human as well as the divine aspects of Christ.

4. They also gave the example of the sun, which despite being distinct, its light and heat permeate the universe and falls on every object.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the word of God took the human body as its principle in which it subsisted.

Ibn Taymiyyah urges the Christians to differentiate between the physical existence of the sun and its impact. What is seen or felt on the objects is merely the impact and the not sun proper. The sun is far removed from the objects on which fall its light and rays, what to think of the distance between God and His creation. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the sun does not unite with or dwell in the rays that are dependent on other objects, nor does it unite with the objects that receive its light. The sun is a distinct entity. Moreover, the sun's light that is inherent in the sun is not the light that is dependent on the various objects it falls on. Rather, it is seen red on red objects and black on black objects. Moreover, the example of the sun and its light is also invalid on the ground that the light of the sun is in need of the object it falls on. It

is blasphemy to believe that God is in need of any created thing. In addition, heat cannot reach the objects that are hidden under other objects. If the Christians consider God a spirit in the Christ, then a parallel statement can be made that the sun existed in a small area of land. If anyone said about a much smaller object such as a planet, a mountain or even a big rock that it was in the womb of a woman, that person would be ridiculed, what if this claim is said about God! If the Christians say that God descended from heaven on the mount and spoke to Moses from the bush or in the column of cloud, it does not mean that he united with a creature, nor does it mean that His speech was subsistent in any of His creation. However, the Christians uphold that God united with Christ and his voice was the voice of the Lord of the World without any medium.<sup>52</sup>

According to the *salaf*, Ibn Taymiyyah affirms, Allah spoke the Quran and the other scriptures and He spoke to Moses without any medium. None of them said that the speech that Moses heard was eternal. Rather, they said that Allah is ever speaking in the time and manner He wishes. This is because the speech is a perfect attribute and then He possesses this faculty. No one can be called All-Hearing All-Knowledgeable All-Merciful, if these attributes are inherent in a being other than him. Likewise, the speech that is done at will is more an attribute of perfection than when done unwillingly. The speech that is dependent on someone yet proceeds without his will, is consequently either impossible or is a shortcoming on the part of that person, who is said to speak against his will, as in the case of the demoniac. Moreover, is it perfect for God to be eternally speaking than to speak after being unable to; if this is the case when it is supposedly possible, how far more so when it is impossible! It is blasphemous to think that Allah is deficient.

The Muslim *ummah* was safe from innovation in religion because whenever a heresy surfaced, there were religious scholars who were able to refute it and show people the right path, unlike in the case of the Christians who innovated in religion and confronted those who opposed them. This is why the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Allah looked at the inhabitants of the earth [before the advent of Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him] and

condemned them all, the Arabs and the non-Arabs, except for some of the People of the Book.”<sup>53</sup>

5. They also gave the example of the soul and the body<sup>54</sup> to justify the incarnation. Ibn Taymiyyah refutes this example and establishes the differences between this example and the supposed unification of the speaking word of God and the human Christ.

Ibn Taymiyyah says that it is not a correct example for the following reasons:

- It is universally acknowledged that the body is diametrically different before and after it separates from the soul. There is no difference bigger than the difference between life and death. Adam, for example, was created from water and earth, and then he became burnt clay. Then the soul was breathed into it, whereupon, he became a body with blood, nerves and flesh. Can any sane person claim that Adam was the same before and after the breathing of the soul? His descendants are created from a small drop. This passes through many embryological stages. In all such stages man is merely a dead body. After the soul is breathed into it, the body starts to manifest life. The blood runs in the veins and arteries, and the baby starts all his movements and activities only after that.
- As the soul feels the pain with the body, then, according to the example given by the Christians whereby the unification of the word with the human body is equalized with the soul and the body, the word of God felt the pain of the persecution of Jesus and torture at the crucifixion. It also must have felt the hunger and the thirst of the human body.
- This nullifies the clause that the ‘Christ was fully human and fully divine’ as, by the same token, man should have been fully a soul and fully a body just as before unification. Likewise, the burning rod of iron would be fully fire and fully iron. However, the man is a composite of the two. Man is not a soul and man is not a body. The



word *man* applies to both united. If it were real unification, then Christ would be half-human and half-divine. Ibn Taymiyyah said:

It is not right to say that Christ himself was fully divine and Christ himself was fully human, as conceptualizing this in its full sense, would lead to the definite conclusion ... that the very human is the divine himself. If this is said as regards to two creatures, such as an angel and a human that they are the same, this is obviously false. What if it is said about the Lord of the World!<sup>55</sup>

- The Christians claim that the Christ was crucified and died and that his speaking soul left him and in this very state, the divine did not leave him. Here, whereas the soul departs with the body at death, the divine character did not. Therefore, this unification is more influential than the unification of the soul and the body.<sup>56</sup>
- The soul on its unification with the body has features and behaviors different from those it had before the unification. Again, when it leaves the body, its actions and features change. If the example is true, then it means that God after unifying with the human changed actions and features just as the soul, and He would be like the abstract soul before unification.
- The soul and the body share the same actions, the good and the bad and their consequences. This is even more true to the soul than to the body. If God were so, then whatever Christ did at will, it would be God's. Moreover, as the soul is addressed with the injunctions of the law, then God incarnate is likewise addressed with the injunctions that the Christ was ordered. The God incarnate would pray and worship. This nullifies their claim that he created with his divinity and ate and worshiped with his humanity. The soul and the body in their unification share the same actions. So, if God gives any command, they both would carry out that command. If any pain befalls them, they both suffer, and rather, the soul suffers more. Interestingly, when a jinn possesses any human being, such man or woman changes the way he/she speaks; the voice becomes the jinn's not the man's. If the body

is beaten then only the jinn suffers the pain. This is common experience.

Ibn Taymiyyah said that he did that several times. The jinni changes and the person possessed changes and the beating is felt only by the jinn. If we consider the unification of the soul and the body more perfect, then the soul must undergo even more changes. The Christians adamantly assert that the divine quality was observed on the Christ neither before nor after the performance of the miracles. He was seen simply as a human like any other human.

### **3.6 Transfiguration: A Corollary**

Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that the incarnation entails transfiguration. The human or the divine would change into the other essence or a third essence. This is in clear conflict with the doctrine that supposes that the incarnation is free from any confusion, division or transfiguration<sup>57</sup>. In addition, when two things unite, they become one. If they do not become one then they are not united. If the result of the union is either of the two constituents, then the other is nonexistent. Clearly, in this case it is annihilation not unification. Moreover, one should note that some of the Christians believe that Christ is one with one nature, one substance and one will.

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that the union with God must necessitate a tremendous change. The Prophets during revelation used to undergo a lot of physical exhaustion and psychological and spiritual developments that were easily observable to the people who happened to be present. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), for example, would undergo physical experiences such as total preoccupation, excessive perspiration, increased body weight, etc. to the extent that if he was on his mount, it would sit, due to the overweight that is added to the weight of The Prophet after the revelation started. If his leg happened to be leaning on another's leg, that other would feel all but breakage. These bodily manifestations appeared on the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), although he did not claim unity with God, nor did he claim that he saw God.

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah argues, that Jesus could not unite with God without being recognized by the people. Rather, people thought that they were talking, mixing with and accompanying a human being. Ibn Taymiyyah, Further, argues that the prophets including Moses<sup>58</sup>, Jesus<sup>59</sup> and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) <sup>60</sup> declared that man could not see God in this life. If seeing is not feasible, unification and incarnation are a fortiori not.

Yet, according to Christians , Christ did not witness any changes commensurate with the magnitude of the event (i.e., unity with God). Rather, they insist that before baptism he performed no miracles. Ibn Taymiyyah wonders how could it happen without any such manifestations, whereas according to them, when Moses heard the voice he was enshrined in light, which would have a lesser impact than the unification as it is nothing besides the unification with God. Ibn Taymiyyah uses common sense to defy the notion that God spoke through the Christ in the literal sense of the word. He argues that if an angel or a jinn united or dwelled in a human being and spoke through him, the people would easily recognize that the speaker is not that human but another. How clear it would be of God! It would be much clearer in deed!

Ibn Taymiyyah also points out another error the Christians have fallen in: he states that unity necessitates that the united two should become one and has the same actions and the same features. The Christians confirm unity but differ on the question of the features; they (monophysites and chalcedonians) differ whether Christ has one nature or two natures. Moreover, some say that he has one will (monothelitists) and some say he has two wills.

### **3.7 Incarnation: An Insult to God**

Ibn Taymiyyah declares that the indwelling is not credible unless the thing or the being which is said to indwell is in need of the thing that receives, (or is the locus of) the indweller. He compares the theory of God incarnate with that of the philosophers and the pantheists. He says that the philosophers proposed the theory of matter and form (hylomorphism), in which they affirm that matter is the principle of form. They also acknowledge that the form is dependent on matter. Moreover, the philosophers

uphold that the heavens are eternal and Self-Necessary and that the first of them is a cause for the rest heavens, which the Christians in their theology try to emulate. In the same manner, the proponents of the Unity of Existence consider the relation of the creator to the creation as the relation of matter and form, as suggested by Ibn Sab'een, who says that God is water in water, fire in fire, and in everything in the form of that thing.<sup>61</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah said that “he who thinks that Allah is in need of anything in any way, he is a calumniating disbeliever, since need is an attribute of deficiency. How much more grave is then the case of those who claim that He is in need of everything, [insinuating at the pantheists.]?”<sup>62</sup> Interestingly those who investigated into the relationship between Christian dogma and its intellectual environment affirmed that the early Christians were influenced by both the philosophers and the stoics who were materialists and pantheists. Here Ibn Taymiyyah makes almost the same assertion.

The Christians claim that in the same manner as the abstract matters need something concrete to appear through, God wanted to appear to people therefore He dwelled in Christ.<sup>63</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah makes the following refutations against this claim:

How can we prove that the spirit of man is more subtle than all other creatures, including the angels, Gabriel and the spirit that was breathed into Adam? Even if it is taken for granted that God united, it means that He united with or indwelt in blood and flesh. He did not unite with the spirit.

The appearance of God through the body of Christ must effect such a great change that everyone who happened to see him like the apostles and the others would surely have recognized him. If this did not happen, it simply means that there is no difference between God and any of His creations. The implications of these are invalid. If God is so insignificant that people did not see or recognize him, then their claim that God appeared through the Christ is not correct. It becomes absurd to claim that God made the incarnation a means to appear to people and yet people do not recognize him. If people did not see God then the example they gave is useless, since in no case could people see God.

Rather, the appearance of divine affairs is more feasible in the abstract than in the concrete. The angels take the revelation from God then they bring it to the prophets. Such revelation reaches the angels first then it reaches the Prophets, as they are the intermediaries. If it were possible that God united with any, He would a fortiori unite with the angels not the humans. In order to receive revelation from the angels Allah has qualified the prophets to be able to receive revelation from the angels. The angels sometimes come to the prophets in an inhuman form. They do not need to change their forms or unite with the humans. Therefore, God did not unite with Gabriel so as to be able to talk with the prophets. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the angels sometimes take the form of men, but no one ever seen an angel and a human becoming one. If this is not possible in the case of an angel, then it is more so in the case of God.

Jinn may unite with the human being but they never become one with him. Rather, they become two with two wills and two essences. The jinni enters the human being and speaks with his tongue.

The Christians are different concerning the nature of Christ despite their emphasis on the unification. Some of them say he is one nature (monophysitism) but some claim that he has two. Some say that he has one will (monothelitism) but the others claim that he has two. Then for each kind, there must be a different kind of unification. This is naturally not as easy as the dwelling of a jinn in a man. If this cannot happen in the case of the angels and the jinn, it is, a fortiori, less likely in the case of the Lord of the World. The Christians should concede that he is one with one will and nature, in which case all that happened to one, must have happened to the other too. If they do not subscribe to this view, then they adopt that God multiple.

### **3.8 Essence vs. Accident**

To negate the multiplicity of gods in the concepts of incarnation and Trinity, the advocates have imported the philosophical dichotomy of essence and accident, as exclusively representing the whole existence. Whereas the former denotes anything that is existent on its own right, the latter depends on another in its existence. In short,

incidents are the properties that essences may have. Now, in the discussion of God's existence in the Trinity and as incarnate these terms seem to avail much for the Christians in negating multiplicity of gods, especially when we consider that the Christians affirm that the word or son of God is of the same essence as the Father.

Ibn Taymiyyah states that the Christians consider God to be an essence; since essences are superior to incidents. Therefore they believe they describe God with the best names and avoid assigning to him any lesser degree. Rather, they say that He is the noblest existing ever; therefore, He is an essence. Furthermore, they believe, as Ibn Taymiyyah reports, that God is an immaterial essence. This means to them that He although being a *jawhar* (essence), He does not receive accidents or occupy space, unlike the material things. Apparently, they follow this tactic to prove the divinity and incarnation. Ibn Taymiyyah responds in the following:

- Using the term is the least thing to repudiate, since Allah is not named *jawhar* in the Scriptures. Rather, he asserts that it is a Roman word interpreted differently by different people.<sup>64</sup> Sometimes they say it denotes origin, sometimes person and in other times the self along with the attributes. However, he said there is a difference between calling Allah with such names and just talking about him using those names. Calling him is not permissible except with His beatific names that are mentioned in His scripture or by His messenger, following the verse, "Allah has the beatific names, so call him with them."<sup>65</sup> To talk about him with other good names to elaborate on the meaning, this is permissible, as long as they have correct meaning. He also maintains that this term (*jawhar*) has been taken from the Greek philosophers, and has no place in religious terminology. Moreover, he says that philosophers did not differ on the essence of things as they did concerning the accidents. Some believe they are additions to the essence, whereas others say they are not. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah says it is safer for the Christians to let the divine to be interpreted not in the light of these philosophical implications, since neither the name nor the meanings is stated by the prophets and the scriptures.

- Secondly, he believes that the intelligible can only be visualized by the mind, as having independent existence. The same thing can be said about the existence of a *jawhar* or essence divested of its attributes; in reality, however, there is nothing such that has essence but no properties or accidents. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that calling Allah as essence ripped of attributes is a philosophy traceable to Aristotle and his followers who denied the attributes of Allah. Thus, he concludes that the Christians who uphold this theory are followers of philosophers not the Christ or apostles. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah diagnoses the confusion of the Christians thus:

“The reason for this is that they structured for themselves a dogma partially from the clear cut texts, such as their statement that God is one; some from their equivocal texts of the prophets, such as the son and the holy spirit; and some from the literature of the philosophers and the attribute-denier polytheists, such as those who say that He is essence without properties.”<sup>66</sup>

### **3.9 Misinterpretation of the Scriptures**

There are biblical texts that led some to use them as evidences for their assumptions of indwelling or incarnation, such as: “the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir into them; he shined forth from the mount of Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his hand went a fiery law for them.”<sup>67</sup>

The verbs ‘rose up’ and ‘shined forth’ are possibly misinterpreted as to prove God permeating the world through unity or indwelling. However, it is unanimously agreed among all religions that God did not dwell in Moses when He spoke to him; and in the same manner, He did not dwell in the mount of Paran, although He stated that He ‘shined forth from’ it. Ibn Taymiyyah gives more examples from the Bible wherein these verbs are used but did not mean the literal interpretation, such as in the case when it is stated that God came from Jerusalem. Whereas it is thus stated, neither Moses nor anyone else claimed to have seen God as independent or incarnate in any form.<sup>68</sup> Rather, Christ asserted that no one could see God, which is an inclusive negation. Further, touching would have a greater bearing than mere seeing. Therefore, if no human can see God, then, a fortiori, touching is more to be so. Likewise, unification is far more unlikely than seeing.

If this supposed unification is interpreted to mean that knowledge emanates from Allah into the hearts and minds of the prophets<sup>69</sup>, then it is not the exclusive right of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the slave cannot be a deity by virtue of the knowledge that 'dwells' in him.

The question whether the speech and knowledge of Allah is He or 'other than Him' is difficult to say immediately, as the phrase 'other than Him' is equivocal. If it is taken to mean that they are independent of Him, then it is not right. The attributes of anything cannot be other than or distinct from the object on which they depend. This is more so in relation to the creator. If, however, the phrase 'other than Him' means that they are not He, then the attribute is not the subject proper. Moreover, the name of the Lord Allah when used in its absolute sense, it includes the Holy Self along with all that He deserves of the attributes of perfection. It is not possible for the essence to exist bereft of its attributes. Therefore, the name 'Allah' includes also the perfect attributes of Him. In fact, nothing exists divested of its attributes. With this, Ibn Taymiyyah tries to prove that the word of God, which, according to him, is the attribute of speech, cannot be distinct from Him and dwell in human body.

Ibn Taymiyyah opens possibilities for the interpretation of the texts that seem to include any trace of incarnation. The Christians claim that God, in order to talk to His people, appeared to them through the Christ. As He is too subtle to appear to people, He wanted to show himself through a concrete body. Ibn Taymiyyah here raised the question: was the word that united with the Christ God's attribute, His essence or both? If the uniting element was God's attribute of speech, then this can mean either of two things: if God's speech was sent down on the Christ, then this is true and it is not the exclusive privilege of the Christ. All prophets received revelation in this manner. If it means that the attribute of speech detached itself from God and dwelled in the Christ, then this is not true. Yet, if true it would not avail the Christians anything since they believe that Christ was the creator of the heavens and the earth<sup>70</sup>, the creator of Adam and the son of Adam, the creator of Mary and the son of Mary; the son by his humanity and the creator by his divinity. Furthermore, he says that the Christians admit that God dwelled in the Christ as He did in others. The dwelling in



the Christ is like the indwelling that is mentioned by David that God dwelled in the hearts of the saints. This is obviously the indwelling of faith and the knowledge of God and not God per se.<sup>71</sup>

### **3.10 Anthropomorphic Texts**

Thus, the appearance of God to His servants can mean the appearance of faith in their hearts or it can mean the appearance of God's cognitive example or notional image in their hearts. Even in the Quran, there are texts that seem to carry this meaning: that God pervades the world (with His power and knowledge). Such texts should not be interpreted literally. For example, Allah said in the Quran, "He is God in the Heaven and God in the earth."<sup>72</sup>

In the authentic *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Allah is reported to have said: my slave, I got ill but you did not visit me...my slave, I was hungry but you did not feed me," etc. In a similar context, Allah said that if He loves any of His slaves, He becomes the hearing power with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he takes and the leg with which he walks. In the same manner, when any person would like to express his love to another, such person uses expressions such as, 'you are in my heart', 'you are my heart', 'you are in my eye', etc. Through these examples, Ibn Taymiyyah tries to prove that such expressions must not be taken literally. They are merely expressions of love, knowledge, etc., and there is no intention of indwelling. Ibn Taymiyyah diagnoses the mistake as lying in the inability of the advocates of the indwelling to distinguish between the different kinds of existence of any object and the existence of its cognitive example in the mind of the perceiver. This very mistake, Ibn Taymiyyah opines, has led the people like abu Yazīd Al-Bisṭāmī, and the rest of the proponents of the idea of immanent God to advocate the pantheistic theory.

In our daily experience, the same thing can have many manifestations: physical, cognitive, orthographic, verbal, etc. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the example of the sun. It is the sun, which is in the sky, the sun, which is thought of by the hearts or minds of people, the sun whose name is articulated by the tongues and the s-u-n that is written

with pens. If the word ‘sun’ is written in paper, and some assert that the sun is on paper, no one would think of it to be the object which is in the sky. Rather, one would think of its orthographical realization.

Ibn Taymiyyah provides the reader with even more examples where such expressions should not be taken literally. It can be said that two people are united whereas they are far apart. Such unification can be unification through ideology or through loyalty or through aim. These types of unification do not mean physical unification. It also can happen even without the knowledge of any of the unifying parties. The seen can indwell in the heart of the seer without his knowledge.

Regarding the terms and titles that the prophets did not negate or affirm such as the direction and the spatial boundaries of God, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, they should not be negated or affirmed. However, if the affirmer arrives at a correct meaning, then he is correct. If he speaks in terms of negating such uses and he arrives at a correct meaning then he is correct, even if he used wrong expressions. However, those who affirm or negate the truth and falsehood at the same time are correct in what is right and wrong in what is wrong. They have thus confused the truth and falsehood. All prophets are unanimous that God is above. Moreover, in the Quran and the Sunnah are about one thousand references to this fact.

### **3.11 The Ascension and God’s Indivisibility**

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah utilizes the biblical narrative of the resurrection of Christ and his sitting to the right of his Father to rebut the Christian belief of the indivisibility of God. Ibn Taymiyyah shares with them the belief that God is indivisible. However, according to this narrative, God is portrayed to be divisible. Ibn Taymiyyah said that their statement that God is indivisible contradict their creed and the way they portray Him, namely, that He has united with Christ and that Christ ascended to the heavens and sat to the right of his Father. The ascender, according to them, was Christ, who was fully human and fully divine. They do not believe that the one, who sat to the right of the Father, was Jesus in humanity. Rather, they believe

that Christ in his full humanity and full divinity sat to the right of the Father. Is there a clearer example of division than this?

Moreover, this is not the statement of the prophets so as to claim that it is right but intelligible for humans. It is, rather, the statement of the bishops. They pinpointed it and made it their creed. If they spoke of what they could not comprehend, then they are ignorant and must not be followed. If the Christians understood that, then no sane man would understand of the fact that the Christ in his divinity sat to the right of his Father anything other than the latter is independent of the God incarnate. Understood as such, it is plain division and separation.

Ibn Taymiyyah is highlighting one of the critical issues in the unity and distinction paradox. The divine is claimed by the Christians to be inseparable and indivisible. Yet, they insist on the incident of the ascension and the sitting to the right of the Father. If the divine existence is one, it will not sit to the right of its own self. The phrase ‘to the right of his Father’ tells us clearly that it (divine existence) is not one.

As a result, another question arises: is the God incarnate the Father or His attribute? If He was the Father, then Christ was the Father. However, this is unanimously denied by all the Christians. If God the incarnate was not an attribute of the Father, the whole picture becomes rationally unpalatable and absurd. God’s attribute cannot detach itself from Him, nor can it unite with or dwell in anything. Moreover, no sane person would ever think of an attribute to be a creator. Interestingly, the Christians believe that Christ created everything including Adam and Mary, although he is the son of both. According to them, with respect to his divinity, he created them; but with respect to his humanity, he was the son of Adam and Mary.

Ibn Taymiyyah also shows that they are uncertain whether God just took Jesus to be a barrier for Him through whom He could talk to people, or that He really united with him. In other words, is it union or indwelling?

Ibn Taymiyyah tries to use the arguments of the Christian sects refuting one another. Ibn Baṭrīq, the Melkite historian, tries to rebut the Nestorian doctrine of unity. Ibn Taymiyyah proves that the Melkites’ stance on the issue is not better than that of the

Nestorians. For example, Ibn Baṭrīq disagrees with the Nestorians on the time of the unification. He said that if they say that God united with Christ before pregnancy, then it means that He united with him before he became a man, which is against the Nestorian condition that He united with a partial man. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that the Melkites are more erroneous in this regard. If the Melkites claim that He united with him when he was a full human, then there is no scope of partnership of the two natures.

### **3.12 The Christian Convert Argues**

Ibn Taymiyyah quotes a Christian convert to Islam who had been a great authority in Christianity. This scholar was called Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb explicating the doctrines of the different Christian groups in his statement of the reasons that led him to convert to Islam. According to him, the Jacobites professed that Mary had begotten God (*theotokos*), that he suffered pain and was crucified and died. After three days, he rose from the dead. This goes against the Chalcedonian creed. The Melkites, for instance, claim that Christ is one person with two natures; each nature has a will. The human has a will (like David and Ibrahīm) and the divine has a will (like the Father and the son.) They, like the Jacobites, claim that Mary has begotten a god and that Christ is a name that enshrines the human and the divine natures. Although they confess this, they claim that the body of Christ died but God who they claim Mary has begotten, did not die except by the essence of the human nature within him. Ibn Taymiyyah wonders:

Did begetting, death and all other acts that the Christians talk about happen to Christ apart from his two essences? How could a rational person consider it correct to worship a god who is begotten from a human woman, died and suffered from pain and epidemics?<sup>73</sup>

This obviously contradicts with the number of the persons of the triune God, claimed by the Christians. In the above statement, Christ has two natures, two essences but one person. However, in the Trinitarian creed, the three persons are one essence and one god. Therefore, the objection raised here is that “they prove two hypostases for one essence and only one hypostasis for two united essences, although the hypostases’

will is only one. Still, they claim that there are two wills and two natures for the human character and the divine character”<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb points out more faults in their creed. He says that if the son was called so because he came from God, the Holy Spirit has a more right to be called so, since it also came from God. Otherwise, what is the difference between the two? He also declares that the Holy Spirit was superior to the son, since it led him to the trial of the Devil and changed him, from the simple human to the God incarnate. The changer is superior to the changed and the arranger is superior to the changed. The doer is superior to the object. He finds out another contradiction. The claim that Mary has begotten a god and the claim that he was crucified and buried are contradictory.

Ibn Taymiyyah brings into light the will of Christ. He observes that two opposing wills cannot coexist in one entity. The human will would struggle for eating, drinking, worshipping and praying whereas the divine will would take to an opposite direction. Each will would shirk the actions of the other. If they exist in the same thing then it would want two opposing actions at the same time. This is and absurd. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that if the Christians understand what they say, it would mean that it is reasonable. If they say what they do not understand, then it necessarily means that they said about Allah what they do not understand.<sup>75</sup> However, if anyone quotes the prophets verbatim, he is not obliged to comprehend what they say. Nevertheless, the Christians, Ibn Taymiyyah rightly observed, brought about things that are neither reasonable nor authentically reported from the prophets

If the Christians justify the unification by saying that he did so in order to set a perfect example for humanity, it is no wonder that they claim He felt sorry, and bit His hand with repentance so as to set an example for the people to repent their sins. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that whatever bad opinions the devious sects have about God, the Christians’ allegations would even be worse and more disgracing. Moreover, as they espouse this kind of unification they cannot rebut the other’s allegations that God united with any one apart from Christ unless they adduce specific evidences regarding that, (i.e. evidences that state clearly that that was the exclusive privilege for the

Christ to the exclusion of any other.) If they deny it on the bases that no one claimed that or that they do not have any idea about that, it can be easily said that their ignorance of the existence of something does not make it nonexistent. If something is taken as a sign for the existence of another, its absence does not necessarily mean that other thing is nonexistent too. It is only when the first is a necessary condition for the existence of the second; the nonexistence of the first leads to the nonexistence of the ensuing thing. Even the anthropomorphists never claimed that God ever united with any of His creatures.

Although Ibn Taymiyyah often mentions only three groups of the Christians, he acknowledges the existence of many apart from them and further refers the reader to the history written by the Christian historian Sa'īd bin Al-Batrīq for more information.

The physical birth of God incarnate from the human woman necessitates that that woman became a wife, and had a sexual act with the Father. This act with the human is more feasible than unifying with him and facing the same fate as he has. Moreover, the begetting, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts, cannot be thought of except with created things.

### **3.13 The Crucifixion for Atonement**

Ibn Taymiyyah starts with stating the ideological background of the doctrine. He said

That the Christians say that the Christ, who is both divine and human, surrendered to the disbelievers' crucifixion in order to avoid being cast in Hell by the Satan as the other prophets.<sup>76</sup> They further state that he did not expose himself, as God or Son of God, to the Satan so that he may not know him, and surrendered to the enemies to take, beat him, spit in his face, put the thorns on his head and crucify him. He showed meekness on his death, screamed for the aid of his lord and asked Him why He subjected him to his enemies. He did all this in order not to be noticed by the devil, so the devil will not recognize that he was the God and the son of God. Therefore, he will not take his spirit to the Hell as he took those of Ibrahim and Noah.<sup>77</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah attempted to disprove this doctrine (as he understands it) in the following arguments:

- If Satan took the children of Adam by the sin of their father, (as the Christians claim), then there is no difference between the human Christ and the others. If he took them under the pretext of their own sins, why should he take them by the sin of their father?
- Will those who came before the demise of the Christ, will they meet the same fate as those who came after him? If yes, why then was the devil enabled to take the predecessors and not the successors, since they are more sinful than the prophets are? How could it be reasonable that God empowered the devil to punish the prophets before Christ while the tyrants after him were spared?
- Taking the offspring of Adam to the Hell is either just or unjust. If just, then the devil is not to be blamed; and it is not appropriate for Christ to elude him to escape the justice that he deserved, since it is compulsory to let justice take its course. If, however, it was unjust, why did not God prevent the devil from doing it? If the answer was that God could not, then they would be attributing inefficiency to God. If He was able to ward off such injustice but did not do it then there is no difference between warding it off before or after the Christ. The time factor has no bearing here.
- The devil should not be held culpable before the Christ, and therefore there is no need to punish or blame him. If he was justified then there is no need for the trick. He should not be taken by his crime.
- Before the crucifixion, if the devil was excused, how could it be logical to be punished through the crucifixion as he could have said that he did not know that the crucified was the Christ in his humanity? Further, he could have said to God that you had given me the permission to take all humanity to Hell and the Christ is but one of them. I did not know that you or your son united with him. If I knew, I would have glorified him but I did not know.
- Taking the people apart from the Christ to the Hell is, according to the Christians, permissible. And if that is true, then God would have no plea against the devil.

- If the sins of Adam and his children should not be assigned to the devil, it is not logical to claim that the devil has the right to tempt the people to do evil and he is given the right to punish them. Here, Ibn Taymiyyah detects an analogy between the Christians and the Zoroastrians, who claim that all evil and punishment is exclusively carried out by the devil. He further observed that the Manichaeism is a syncretism of Christianity and Zoroastrianism, and their leader was a Christian Zoroastrian.
- If God united or dwelled in the Christ in order to confront the injustice of the devil, then why did not he do the same in any of the children of Adam, before the Christ since the people before him were more sinful than the people who came after the Christ?
- The Christian arguments are completely illogical. How is it possible that all the people, including the saints and the prophets before the Christ were in the prison of the devil by the sin of their father Adam and how is it possible that the only way God resorted to was the crucifixion of Christ. How is it possible that the prophets who were higher in rank than Adam be imprisoned in the devil's prison? Ibrahim's father was a disbeliever and God did not take Ibrahim by the sin of his father. How is it possible that he was imprisoned by the sin of his farthest father? Moreover, Noah strove hard to revert his people to the religion of God all his lifetime, and at last, God destroyed them by his prayer, how could he be imprisoned by the sin of Adam?
- What is the relationship between the Crucifixion, which is one of the major sins, and the extrication of these from the devil? Allah could have prevented him from doing any injustice and punished him. Allah is always in the favor of his helpers and friends. Why did Allah forsake them and made them in the custody of his and their enemy? Was He unable to protect them, or was He not aware of his mischief? If the Christians say so, then it is plain blasphemy, contradiction and degradation of God.
- This creed entails that those who were before the Christ, including those who killed the apostles of the Christ and burned his Bible and the perpetrators



throughout the ages are not culpable for their crimes, as the crucifixion of Christ obliterates all sins humans did.

- The Bible discredits the Christians in this regard. It states that the Christ decried those who claimed to be his followers and told them that they did not know their scholars.
- If sin was invalidated with his ascension, then those who killed him are no longer condemnable by their sins, for after his coming there would be neither sin nor sinners. Those who killed his disciples or burned their books are, too, not sinners. Moreover, all sins since his coming until the Day of Judgment are immediately forgiven. If this is true, then the whole existence becomes meaningless.

Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb, quotes in this regard, a few hymns that the Christians repeat in their prayers. He quoted, for example: “Oh Our Lord, who has conquered with his pain the severity of death” and “with the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ, death was invalidated and the devil’s sedition were stopped and long gone.” In addition, the hymn that is pronounced on the second Friday after Easter: “We have pride in the Cross, which invalidated our sin and we are safe and secure because of it.” This is discredited by the Bible itself. In *Mathew: 7:22-23*, Christ is reported to have said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” This very belief is not in keeping with the biblical declaration. If the sins are forgiven, then why the Christ is threatening not to recognize them? Secondly, in what way are they in need of his forgiveness? Moreover, in other places in *Mathew*, we are told that people would be divided as per their deeds: some in everlasting bliss and the other in everlasting punishment. See, for example, *Mathew: 25:41-46*. This is a plain contradiction with the supposed story of the atonement of the son through the sacrifice he made on the Cross and the whole story of the incarnation and the indwelling. The people are divided into two groups on the bases of their deeds. Those who carried out the commandments

would be blessed and those who rebelled would be punished. Then only the sins cast them into punishment. Understood as such, the incarnation and indwelling, the crucifixion and the atonement all become baseless myths that Al-Ḥasan bin Ayyūb kept incessantly questioning.

The Christians use the Quran in order to justify their belief. They claim that the verse, “they did not truly kill him, nor did they crucify him. Rather, He raised him to himself.”<sup>78</sup> supports Dyophysitistic Christology. They say that Christ was crucified and felt the pain with his humanity not with his divinity. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that Christ was raised body and soul, and therefore he was no longer in need of food, etc., for he has a state different from the state of the people of the earth. Ibn Taymiyyah adds that the Quran in the same context states that Christ said to Allah, “I was a witness over them while I stayed among them. However, when you took me up, you were the watcher over them.”<sup>79</sup> Taken together, the Quranic verses tell us that after the rising of the Christ Allah alone was the witness.

He also quotes the Christians as saying that the verse, “and [remember] when you made out of clay a figure like that of a bird by leave, and you breathed into it, and it became a bird by my leave”<sup>80</sup> indicates that the creator was the word of God identified with the human Christ. They also quote David as saying that God created the heavens and the earth with the word of God. The leave stated in the Quranic verse was the leave of God incarnate, according to the Christians. Ibn Taymiyyah said that if the creator was God, then He would not need the permission of anyone. In addition, there would be no grace bestowed upon him. Moreover, the text they quote tells very clearly that the word was created with; it was not the creator proper. Once we know that he did what he did by the leave of another, then he had the human status like any of the Prophets.

### **3.14 Temporal Considerations**

Here he discusses the concept of pre-existence or co-eternality with the father which is vigorously emphasized in the ecumenical councils. The doctrine of the incarnation can be refuted with reference to the chronological succession of the process of

unification. Ibn Taymiyyah did not miss to ask the question: if the word was the creator and the created which unified with or dwelled in Mary and the created man was taken as barrier, was this alleged creating of this man before, after or during unification? It is entirely absurd to claim that this was before creation, as it is surely impossible to create after the unification. If it was during the unification, then it implies that they have never been together. Some Christians claim that God united with a lifeless body before the spirit was breathed into it, and this union continued after death until he rose up from the grave. Until the time of union, no miracle was performed by this body. However, they substantiate their claim of his divinity by the miracles. Moreover, the non-performance of miracles does not necessarily mean the negation of divinity or divine unification. It also implies that the performance of miracles is a proof of divinity, even if this appeared from a non-living thing. If this is true, then the worshippers of the calf are more excused than the Christians. If God united with the blood clot and the buried body, then it is also possible for him to unite with the calf and the idols.

### **3.15 Parallels in Muslim Theology**

The Christians tried to support their allegations with finding parallels in the Muslim theology.<sup>81</sup> They present these as pretexts for their doctrines. Ibn Taymiyyah therefore, shows the Christians the differences between them and the Muslims. In this regard, the Christians insinuate at the advocates of anthropomorphism. Subscribers to this doctrine liken Allah to His creation. They hold that the physical attributes of Allah mentioned in the Quran should be held in complete analogy with those of humans. They think that Allah for example has a hand like hands of His creation, a leg like the legs of His creation and the same is said about the remaining attributes but they do not believe that Allah is a body. Ibn Taymiyyah proves that these are in a better position than the Christians are. He discusses this and points out the differences and similarities. He stated:

- Despite the fact that both the anthropomorphist Muslims and the Christians share the fact that they interpret texts literally, none shares the Christians the belief in the Trinity and incarnation.

- The Muslims took what is there in the scriptures literally, but the Christians followed what is not in the scriptures.
- The Muslims associated the seemingly anthropomorphic verses with the verses that deny the likeness of Allah to any of His creatures, whereas the Christians did not associate the Trinity and the incarnation with what negates them.
- The Muslims did not call His attributes with names that they invented and interpreted the prophets' statements to mean them; but the Christians gave them names that the prophets never heard of.
- The Muslims did not abandon the many clear and straightforward statements in favor of a few statements that might imply wrong doctrines. However, the Christians did.
- The Muslims did not concoct codes that the prophets did not know of. But the Christians canonized creeds that were not brought by the prophets.
- The Muslims did not believe in something absurd. Nevertheless, the Christians did.
- The Muslims did not uphold self-contradictory notions, whereas the Christians believed that God was one but at the same time claimed that he is two natures (divine and human) and three (persons).

Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that on the bases of the above, the Christians have no right to claim that they are like the Muslims.<sup>82</sup> Further, he affirms that the excessive Muslims who liken Allah to His creation and whom the Muslims consider as non-Muslims are better than the Christians in their theology. The former are less presumptuous in opposing both, religion and reason. If the devious Muslims are better than the Christians are, then it is far more so with reference to the righteous who uphold true doctrines. Ibn Taymiyyah strikes a balanced way between anthropomorphism where God is likened to His creation and the denial of attributes. Ibn Taymiyyah admits that the Quran and *sunnah* contain seemingly anthropomorphic texts but they do not contain anything of what the deniers of attributes claim. None of the books state that God is neither inside nor outside the world, neither immanent nor

transcendent, neither above the world nor is He pointed at, that nothing goes up to Him, nor comes down from Him, that nothing can approach him nor does He approach anything, to the rest of what the deniers of attributes believe. The books do not support anything of these false allegations but there are many verses that contain what seems to indicate corporealism. However, to say that God embodied as the angels or the jinn is more credible than the incarnation upheld by the Christians. This is because it is conventional that the angels can take a human form but they did not become absolutely humans. If this is not feasible for the angels to unite with the humans, how is it possible in the case of the Lord of the World to unite with the humans? Moreover, it is also possible for the jinni to dwell in the human body and speak with his tongue. Nevertheless, they are two essences, two wills and two natures. The Christians claim that the lord of the world united with the human and then some of them claim that he has one nature (Monophysites, like Jacobites) and some claim that he has two natures and two essences (Chalcedonians).

### **3.16 Divinity of Christ**

The assumed divine incarnation of the word of God, (the *logos*) led the Christians to claim that Christ was God. They tried to establish this doctrine through textual as well as rational evidences, thereby producing many Christologies: pneumatic, angelic, kenotic, Chalcedonian, monophysitic, monothelistic, etc. They cannot break away from the ecumenical canons, which the bishops of the different patriarchates decided and devised in the fourth century. A thorough examination of some Christian writers in the early centuries is enough in reaching the conclusion that the Christ was not thought of as the immanent god who was coeternal, consubstantial and one with the Father in the literal sense.

The various apologies compiled by scholars such as Justin, Tertullian (around the years 169 and 220 AD), Tatian, Numenius, Ignatius and Astrides (first half of the second century AD), who lived in the early Christian centuries, prove that a great section of their writings depicts and demonstrates God as one. However, the views of some of them that affirm a trio of godhead were serious attempts at analogizing the Unitarian view inherited from the original Christianity and the Greek philosophy,

which introduces the *logos* as part of the heavenly power independent of God. The translation and dissemination of Christianity in the Hellenistic world was one of the main factors in the departure from pure monotheism to a triadic God.

When Christianity was languishing under persecution of the Greek polities that did not acknowledge Christianity as a true religion, the Christian missionaries tried to preach Christ through the philosophy the Greek recognized. The *logos* which is basically a Greek word was deeply rooted in Greek philosophy; and for the Christians to have the Greek recognition had to use the same terminology, claim Christianity to be the right philosophy which Greek philosophers sought to obtain<sup>83</sup> and incrementally got their theology Hellenized. This syncretism led to having this dogma canonized in the fourth century, under the auspices of Constantine the emperor, who though convener did not recant his Hellenistic beliefs totally. Therefore even in early Christianity there was an obvious analogy between Christian theology and Greek mythology/philosophy, especially middle Platonism<sup>84</sup>. According to middle Platonism, god formed a hierarchy of three principles, with the middle (Demiurge) playing intermediary role between the supreme, who has no immediate contact with the material world, and who is said to be not omnipotent, and the material world. Therefore, the material world is the creation of this intermediary agent.

This philosophy echoed in the post apostolic literature especially in the apologies addressed to Hellenistic elites. This triadic formula infected Christianity and culminated in the canonization of Trinitarian dogma after much rationalization and theorization.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the early church fathers in the first and second centuries such as Justine, Tatian and Irenaeus were not unanimous on the nature and relationship of the principles forming the heavenly power. However, none of them viewed them to constitute an eternal consubstantial unity or even tri-personal God. They viewed them to form a hierarchy of different layers and places. See *Proto-Trinity*, by Thomas Edmund Gaston.

The Muslims followed different approaches and made various judgments concerning these evidences. Some tried to judge them according to the biblical evidences without questioning the authenticity thereof. Yet, others disregarded the authority of their

book and although they did not believe in them as God's word, they responded and refuted their allegations with references from their books. Others attempted to undermine the authenticity of their texts to disprove all claims based on these texts. Some others targeted these doctrines and found out their deficiencies through rational arguments. In this section, we shall see how Ibn Taymiyyah tried to refute the doctrine and whether he acknowledged any authority to their texts.

The divinity of Christ forms the backbone of Christology. It is a putatively accepted doctrine among most of the Christian denominations. As some of the Christian sects do not accept it, this opens up vistas for investigation. In fact, it is this supposed incarnation that postulated the divinity of the Christ, according to the Christian theology. In the previous section we discussed the incarnation of the word of God. In this section, the divinity of Christ is investigated and the evidences thereof are analysed.

### **3.16.1 Godhead vs. Messengership**

According to the Christians, there is a triune God comprised of three persons, one of which is the Christ. He is considered as the second person in the Trinitarian unity. Considered as such, he is accorded the status of deity. Anyone not believing this belief is considered to be of the followers of the Antichrist who will come at the end of time. The Bible said:

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”<sup>86</sup>

In the following pages, we shall attempt to probe into the issue and evaluate the answers of Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Taymiyyah held the view that the ontological dualism of godhead and messengership postulates that the Christ can be either a messenger or god. As these are mutually exclusive, the Christ cannot be both. So, to claim that he is either nullifies the other. Now the Christians should admit that the Christ is simply a human being sent by the Creator of the world to put across His message, or they can claim that he was a god and here they cannot deny the multiplicity of gods.

Furthermore, mixing entails transformation. It is impossible to find two things retaining their individual qualities or properties while united. Change is ineluctable. Applying this example to the issue under discussion, God becomes the messenger and the messenger becomes God. If this conclusion is true, especially with reference to the example of fire and the rod of iron, in the discussion of the unity, then the sufferings on the stakes and outside them must have affected God too. If this is held by the Christians, their statement is more degrading for God than the statement of the Jews who claimed that God was poor and stingy and so on.

### **3.16.2 Biblical Evidences**

In addition, the biblical quotations they cite in substantiation of their theology if authentic should be understood within the linguistic framework of Christ's verbiage. The linguistic uses he followed entail a different interpretation. They quote this biblical verse, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>87</sup> This statement, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, propounds that within the prophetic uses of the language it means that the Christ is God's selected and beloved.<sup>88</sup> The title was also applied to Israel or Jacob when God addressed him with, 'Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.'<sup>89</sup> The title was also given to the Prophet David and the Christ himself said to the apostles that God was his and their father<sup>90</sup>. Nowhere in the discourses of the prophets is it mentioned that the word of God is the son of God in the real sense of the word.

As the title applies to these creatures, it entails that the Christ is created like them. Thus, the title is given to the human Christ not the Christ as a deity 'eternal born not created'. Ibn Taymiyyah also said that it is mentioned nowhere in the discourses of the prophets that Jesus was eternal and born not made. They did not designate the eternal as the son of God. Nor is it stated that God made anything eternal son for himself. He further did not dub any of His attributes His son.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, the biblical quotation that Christ shall be god indicates that it does not mean real divinity. 'Shall be called god' is not a proper expression befitting God. The



other description that characterizes Christ is that he comes and dominates in real dominion. This expression tells us, as Ibn Taymiyyah said that it does not refer to Allah as He is the ever-possessor of the world. He is also characterized with the epithet ‘the light of the day’. He is not made the light itself. These descriptions are accorded to a human being. Had they been attributed to the lord of the world who united with the human Jesus, those who quoted it would have clearly indicated. They would not articulate such utterances, which are either clearly or apparently stating the opposite, or are general and not relevant to the matter under discussion.

However, there are similar statements said by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Yet he never claimed the same allegations. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have said that he was written at the records of Allah as the seal of the prophets when Adam was lying as mud. He further said, “I will tell you what I first was like. I am the invocation of my father Ibrahim, the glad tiding of Jesus, the dream of my mother; she saw when she was about to give birth to me that light emanated from her lighting the palaces of Shām.”<sup>92</sup> This is a clear statement that he was named the seal of the prophets when Adam was only lying in his mud. The meaning of the statement of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is that Allah predestined that he be the seal of the prophets and be prominent through this prophethood. The time of this prophecy is between the creation of Adam and the blowing of life into him. Yet he never claimed eternity although he said, ‘before life was.’ This very characterization shows that it is for one who cannot be god since it is not proper to say that God was before life was. Habakkuk also is quoted to say that Allah was seen on the earth and that Allah mixed with people.<sup>93</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah says that we have to make sure of the prophethood of these two, the authenticity of the narration and the correctness of translation. After that, judgement can be made according to the same criteria as any quotation. Moreover, in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) there are quotations that suggest the pervasion of Allah in the world. Allah is reported by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have said that He refers to Himself as being ill, thirsty, etc., since these exigencies befall man. This is

interpreted to mean that giving charity to the Muslim, helping him in any way is tantamount to helping Allah although He is in no need to anyone. The Christians talk to the images in their churches but say that the address is directed to the people representing these images. This allegorical or figurative language should not be taken literally to indicate the divinity of anyone. These expressions should be understood to mean that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) wanted to indicate the high status a Muslim assumes in the sight of Allah.

Ibn Taymiyyah picks up some of the biblical prophecies that the Christians believe to foretell the advent of Christ, and points out that they do not necessarily mean him since it is not stated clearly. Moreover, he proves that these prophecies apply more clearly to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) than to the Christ. Some of such prophecies are mentioned below.

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”<sup>94</sup>

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”<sup>95</sup>

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever”<sup>96</sup>

In response to these biblical quotations Ibn Taymiyyah argues that these are more applicable to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) than the Christ for the following reasons:

- “The government shall be upon his shoulder” refers to the seal of prophethood on his shoulder, which is a sign that he is the true prophet. This feature is the exclusive possession of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him): that he was sent with the sword which he wears on his shoulders. The phrase, ‘mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,’ testifies to this.

Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was dominant over the followers of the other religions and he was the prince of peace.<sup>97</sup>

- The phrase, ‘Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,’ also is a proof that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the Prophet who was prophesied as he is the last of the prophets and no Prophet was raised after him. Therefore, his law and authority being perfect, required no more laws to be revealed. As such, his law is eternal.

Another verse he quotes is this from *Mathew*: 13: 41: “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” This verse, he asserts, does not refer to the Christ as God. He indicated that some of the Christian scholars said that this verse does not imply that Christ is the lord of lords, or that he is the creator of the angels. He said further that the lord of the angels assigned them to guard the Christ. This is testified by the statement of Luke when he said that God sent him an angel from Heaven to support him.<sup>98</sup> If the Gospels testify that, the angels keep and guard Christ it means that the angels obey the Christ by Allah’s order and that they as well as Christ are in the service of God. He quotes some of the biblical verses that portray that the angels are merely servants of Allah help to support the messengers and prophets. He also cited the verses wherein Christ states that he is sent by Allah and the verse wherein he is sighted and heard to shout for Allah’s help such as when he was on the Cross.

The Christians take as plea for the divinity of Christ the verse wherein it is stated that man was created in the likeness of God. Ibn Taymiyyah refutes this by stating that this is not special to Christ. He is merely one of the creations said to be created in the likeness of God. The word of God is meant here and if this word means the divine attribute of knowledge, then it is not possible that one’s attribute can be like him. Apart from this is that the Christians believe that the Word of God is not created.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, he quotes the verse from *Genesis* 1: 26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that similitude of a thing to another does not entail that they are identical, which implies that they do not share states of possibility, prohibition and permissibility. Rather, there are two things:

- An Area of overlap, which they share. It is a collective concept that is particular to neither of them. Being as such, the similarities here do not breach the line of demarcation between the creator and the created.
- Those properties that are particular to one of similar things; for instance, the attributes of knowledge, life and power. Those particular to God are not available in the slave and vice versa. The defects that are peculiar to the slave should not be attributed to God. Likewise, the divine perfection, which is the exclusive right of God, must not be attributed to the slave. Furthermore, the phrase, ‘in our image, after our likeness’ does not involve the attributes like the speech, the life, and the other attributes that are subsistent in him (the created), because these are created, and then it does not include the divine which they claim to have been incarnate in the human. He also maintained that the human is like the other humans. Therefore, this similarity is not special of the Christ. The phrase, ‘who can be in His likeness if not His word and spirit?’ is baseless.

The statement, ‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,’ with the use of the plural does not indicate multiplicity of the speaker. If the human kings use the plural to refer to themselves individually, God has more right to do so. Moreover, the word which is inherent in something cannot speak. Thus, their claim that God addressed His attribute which they call the son or the spirit is a false claim.

One of the verses they quote to prove the divinity of Christ is “Then the LORD [*sic*] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD [*sic*] out of heaven.”<sup>100</sup> The Christians take this as plea since there are two lords mentioned. The claim, Ibn Taymiyyah said, can be refuted on the following grounds:

- The convention in the Torah is not to refer to any of God’s attributes as the son or the Father. Therefore, Moses did not say this statement.

- If supposedly this was not the convention, then the one who sent rain is normally the one who has the rain. The attribute do not have anything nor does it do anything on its own right.
- The repetition of the noun does not necessarily indicate multiplicity of persons. Rather, it may highlight the absoluteness of the person referred to.

The Christians also make use of this verse to substantiate the alleged divinity of Christ. The verse reads, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”<sup>101</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah propounded that this (as is shown in the following) does not act as a proof for the allegation.

- The word ‘my lord’ can never be used to refer His to attributes. If the Christ was any of His attributes, it is not right to say that the verse means him. If this is the case, then his human entity is far beyond being referred to as such. This being the case, it is now clear that neither the divine nor the human entities of the Christ are meant here.
- In the first instance he said ‘the Lord’ whereas in the second instance he said ‘my lord’ attributing him to himself as his lord, who created him, while in the Christian theology they, despite their excessiveness, say that he is ‘true God from true God’. They make him creator.
- Such being the case, the verse can be interpreted as to mean that the speaker, the Prophet David, out of humility spoke about the Christ as being his master because he thought him to be superior to him.

They also take this verse as a plea, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”<sup>102</sup> For Ibn Taymiyyah this nullifies the supposed pre-existence of Christ. He looked into the matter from the following perspectives:

- He said there is no mention of the attributes of God as son, nor is there any mention of the Trinity. Therefore, it is not a proof in their favor.
- This can be turned against them as God called David his son. This is a clear proof that the title is not an exclusive right of Jesus. Thus, the son as a title is not the attribute of God. Rather, it applies to anyone whom God has fostered of the slaves of His.

- The statement ‘this day have I begotten thee.’ Indicates a recent incidence; something that took place after being nonexistent. However, they believe that the emanation of the word from the Father is an eternal thing.<sup>103</sup> In addition, only one of two conclusions can be arrived at: a) it means the day I begotten you. And here ‘begotten’ means ‘created’. B) It means selected, indicating that that day selected him according to the language of the Bible.

Then Ibn Taymiyyah makes a comparison between the Christians and the polytheists of Quraish. He said that the polytheists of Quraish set up gods and yet believe that they are created by God, not creators, whereas the Christians believe in Jesus to be a creator. They said that the one who spoke to Moses from the tree is one and the same as the one who spoke to His other slaves. There is a great difference between God and slaves. Furthermore, by comparison, Moses had greater miracles than Jesus did.

Then Ibn Taymiyyah looks at the issue from the Quranic perspective wherein he states that as the spirit from which Jesus was created was itself created, Jesus must be created.

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah set four criteria for the establishment of the divinity of Christ. He deals with each one separately:

1. The prophecy that the archangel Gabriel brought from the heaven
2. The statement of John that is confirmed by the Christ, wherein he said that women never ever brought one like him as stated in Mathew: 11:11.
3. The voice heard from the heaven
4. The answer of Christ when John asked about whether he is the one to be awaited as in this verse, “When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?”<sup>104</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah inferred from the story that if Christ was God why did he need to be perfected through the Baptist and why was he unknown to John the Baptist? He inferred that the Baptist, the performer of baptism must be greater than the one baptized. Secondly, God could not be unclear to a man like John. Thirdly, the answer

Jesus gave was thus “Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.”<sup>105</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah says that the answer he gave did not include any claim of divinity. He did not mention any attribute of God as being existent in him. The miracles he pointed out are evidences for prophethood most of which were performed by the prophets. John did not point to him as creator. Moreover, what he said about Christ might be out of courtesy not that he was inferior to Christ.

### **3.16.3 The Story of the Devil**

Ibn Taymiyyah also cites the story of the Devil and his temptation of Christ. This he quotes in substantiation of the humanity of the Christ. The Devil according to the Christians restrained and tempted him in the mountain for forty days. The Devil moreover said to the Devil that if he was the son of God to order the rocks to become bread. The Christ told him that it is written that the life if man does not become bread. Whereupon he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the temple and told him that he was the son of God throw yourself ...etc.

Ibn Taymiyyah wonders how the Christians know all about this and yet still believe in the divinity of Christ. Any sane man can easily come to the conclusion that this cannot take place between God and Satan. The Satan tempted the Christ and ordered him to do many bad things to the extent that he ordered him to prostrate before him. And only then the Christ got offended and rebuked him and God sent an angel to take him. This is the biblical wording:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.<sup>106</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah points out many things in this story that refute the divinity of Christ. They are:

- It is impossible for the Devil to be given the power to tempt God
- The inability of the Christ to defend himself and his need for the angel to rid him of the Devil
- The declaration of the Christ that he is ordered to prostrate before God<sup>107</sup>

All these are clear indications of the humanity of the Christ. Rather, these put Christ in a humiliated position, a position that does not even befit a prophet. This great prophet of God is portrayed to be played with by the Satan, who is the utmost avowed enemy of God. How is it possible that a great prophet such as Jesus be subjected by the Devil?

#### **3.16.4 Subordinationism**

Among the most prominent early Christian theologians, Arius (c.250 – c.336) upheld that the son is subordinate to the Father. “In reaction, the church developed its doctrine of the Trinity, whereby the Son (and Holy Spirit), though distinct persons (hypostases), share with the Father, as his ontological equals, the one being or substance (*ousia*) of God.”<sup>108</sup> The Council of Nicaea condemned Arius and established the Trinitarian dogma in 325. This is a historical fact that Ibn Taymiyyah is well aware of.

Ibn Taymiyyah points out one of the main manifestations of the humanity of Christ. By bringing these issues into light, Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrates that the Bible indicated clearly that Christ was a helpless and subordinate human being. He quotes the following situations:

- His prayer to God such as when people used to come to him to pray for them in situations of distress or illnesses, when he shouted on the stakes, as in this



verse “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”,<sup>109</sup> his prayers for the Jews, and his prayer as in the following:

- “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”<sup>110</sup>
- “He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”<sup>111</sup> The Christ also declares that he cannot be like his God.
- He said, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.”<sup>112</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah also quotes the Bible as stating that God cannot be seen and he who sees him shall die. Jesus has been with the people for thirty-three years and yet they did not die. He also quoted Psalms:8:5: For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Further, the biblical statement says that God said to Jesus that He (God) has begotten him. Being begotten means that he is not eternal and is therefore created. This emphasized through the adverbial ‘this day’<sup>113</sup> this specification has dispelled all doubts that he was not before that day. The offer after that to answer his prayers demonstrates that he is in need of God as he is helpless and unable. Other collaborative evidences are:

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”<sup>114</sup>

“We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.”<sup>115</sup>

“And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”<sup>116</sup>

“And he said unto her, What [*sic*] wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.”<sup>117</sup>

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”<sup>118</sup>

Moreover, when Christ was asked about the hour he responded that he did not know it and said that his Father only knows it. At the same time, he said that the son does not know the hour. These two propositions lead to the conclusion that he was only human. If they claim that, only the human did not know we could say that none knew except the supreme God. It is stated in *Mathew: 24:36*: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah noted that if The Christians believe that Jesus is God because he is entitled in the Bible as lord, then all those who are called lords are similarly gods such as some of the kings and some of the prophets like Joseph as stated in the Torah.<sup>119</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah mentions many examples of this type.

### **3.16.5 Prophecies about the Divinity of Christ**

Ibn Taymiyyah again says that if the Christians say that the prophets foretold about the divinity of the Christ as in “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”<sup>120</sup> Immanuel according to Ibn Taymiyyah means ‘God with us’.<sup>121</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah responds to this presupposition by saying that this is a title conferred on the nobles.

Overall, whatever is stated about the divinity of Christ can be proved for the other prophets, too. Whatever the Christians might say to support the claim, Ibn Taymiyyah finds out parallel proofs for the other prophets, thus negating all peculiarities allegedly dedicated to the Christ to portray him to be God.

Furthermore, he says the Christians cannot prove that Christ was God except through proving the authenticity of their books; they can prove the authenticity of their books only through proving the apostles infallible messengers of God, which in turn can be proven only through proving that Christ was God. This infinitely cycling argumentation makes their point impossible.<sup>122</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah quotes some of the *aḥādīth* wherein the cardinal crime perpetrated by the Christians, are highlighted. Allah is reported by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have said, “The son of Adam has belied me while he has no right to do so, and abused me while he has no right to do so. He belied me when he said, ‘How can He revive me as He first created me,’ whereas creating something for the first time is not easier than reviving it. He belied me when he said that I have taken a son whereas I am the one needless who does not beget nor is begotten. I have no equal.”<sup>123</sup>

Therefore, Muath bin Jabal said that the Christians profaned Allah in a way that no one ever did it. For prevention, the Islamic law prohibited all to talk about God in terms of the son or child, in order to block all ways leading to polytheism. It also prohibited bowing for anyone even if that is done as a greeting. In like manner, it prohibited offering prayers on the sunrise time and banned even little consumption of wine. Through these preventive measures, Islamic Sharia has preserved monotheism from all transgressions.

Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to pose a question for the Christians, a question that they are not able to answer: the divine character in Christ where is it taken from; in which scripture is it mentioned? Which Prophet has foretold his advent? Ibn Taymiyyah says that the only evidence they have in support of their claim is the verse in Mathew, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”<sup>124</sup>.

An examination has been so far made into the claims brought forth by the Christians in justification and substantiation of the incarnation and Trinity, and how Ibn Taymiyyah refuted them. He very often takes evidences from their scriptures and interprets them according to his understanding of the basic teachings of God in the Quran and according to his understanding of philosophy and logic. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that he believed their scripture to be authentic and free from error. In the following chapters an investigation into the true position he stands in relation to the authenticity of their books will be attempted.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> <http://Biblehub.com/greek/3056.htm> retrieved on 24-2-2015. P. 1

<sup>2</sup> See also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos#Logos\\_in\\_Hellenistic\\_Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos#Logos_in_Hellenistic_Judaism), accessed on 04/09/2015

<sup>3</sup> As in *Mathew*:7 :24 and 7 :26

<sup>4</sup> As in *2Peter*: 1: 19

<sup>5</sup> The *Acts of Apostles* is replete with references to the word of God where revelation is meant.

<sup>6</sup> As in *Proverbs*: 1:20-33;8:1-9:6

<sup>7</sup> See for example Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb Al-Ṣaḥīḥ Liman Baddala Dīn Al-Masīḥ*, edited by Ali Hasan Nāṣir et al, Dār Al-Āṣimah, Riyadh KSA, 1994 vol.4, pp. 444-5 (hereafter *al- Jawāb*)

<sup>8</sup> Some traditional commentators such as Barclay have viewed the gospel of John as an attempt to reconcile Christianity to Greek thoughts.

<sup>9</sup> Here Ibn Taymiyyah gives a rule: when we say that the attribute is not different from its subject, it means that they are not one and the same thing. Yet, he emphasizes that the name given to anything refers to both the attribute and the being it is dependent on. Therefore, he criticizes the philosophers who did not differentiate between the thing known, for example, and the knower. Moreover, they in their discussions about Allah, said He is the intellect, the person who has intellect and the thing that the intellect contains. Therefore, they do not differentiate between the known, the knower and the knowing mind. The philosophers consider these as having one existence. According to them, the lord of the world is merely knowledge. The peripatetic philosophers call the angels the intellects, but as the prophets never talked about the angels as the intellects, it is utterly not right to call them so. Ibn Taymiyyah further talks about Aristotle and his followers and says that they have no knowledge of the angels or the jinn. *Al-Jawāb* vol. 5, pp.25-26

<sup>10</sup> This is again one of the influences of Greek philosophy. The *logos* is the creating word of God as it is God's command. When the Christians took Jesus to be the *logos* or Word of God they considered him the creating word of God and therefore the creator of everything.

<sup>11</sup> This has its precedents in plato's thought. Justine in his *First Apology* said: " And Plato, in like manner, used to say that Rhadamanthus and Minos would punish the wicked who came before them; and we say that the same thing will be done, but at the hand of Christ." <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm> retrieved on 24-2-2015

<sup>12</sup> All these meanings are the meanings of the Greek 'logos'.

<sup>13</sup> The Catholic Encyclopaedia, *The Dogma Of The Trinity*

<http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=11699>, retrieved on 12/01/2016

<sup>14</sup> *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, Edited by Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, Oxford University Press

<sup>15</sup> This tells us very clearly that the term and naturally the meaning associated to it are a later creation or innovation.

<sup>16</sup> M. G. Easton, *Eastons Bible Dictionary* AGES Software • Albany, OR USA Version 2.0 © 1996, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Taqi Othmānī, *What is Christianity*: Armed Forces Printing Press (KSA), 1987, Trans. Mahomed Shoaib Omar p. 2

<sup>18</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypostasis\\_%28philosophy\\_and\\_religion%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypostasis_%28philosophy_and_religion%29) accessed on 25-3-2015

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 3, p.200

<sup>20</sup> Referred to in the Bible as ‘the angel of the lord’ who ‘appears’ to different people to convey divine messages.

<sup>21</sup> *Al-Jawāb* 2/187

<sup>22</sup> Even now, some Christians acknowledge this meaning such as Robert Schmid, who writes in his article entitled “The Triple Myth of The Trinity” that “many excellent papers and books have been written giving reasons why the Holy Spirit is not a person, but simply the power of God.”

<sup>23</sup> I found it nowhere stated that the Holy Spirit is identified with God’s life of ability. Theophilus of Antioch believed it to be His wisdom. Holy Spirit has different meaning in different contexts. It signifies divine power, the soul in man, the giver of strength of faith, etc.

<sup>24</sup> For example: *Isaiah* :63: 10-11, *Psalms*: 51:11, *Ephesians*:1:13, *Luke*:11:13

<sup>25</sup> *Genesis*:1:26:

<sup>26</sup> *Genesis*:3:22

<sup>27</sup> *Genesis*:19:24

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that in the Bible (*Isiah* 40:18 ) God is mentioned to have no equal: “To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?”

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah cross checked and concluded that the man meant here in Adam as is clear from this verse in *Genesis*:5:1: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him”

<sup>30</sup> see *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 3, p.450

<sup>31</sup> The Christians believe that the Father has no source whereas the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him and the Son is begotten by Him. Ibn Taymiyyah interprets this association as His attributes, based on the fact that some of the early Christians made a similar attempt regarding the Holy Spirit and the word.

<sup>32</sup> *Exodus*:3:6

<sup>33</sup> *John*:1:12

<sup>34</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 3, p.477

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, Vol. 4, p.449

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, Vol. 4 p.452

<sup>37</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol.4, p.464

<sup>38</sup> The Nestorians did not believe her to be *theotokos* (birth giver of God) but named her *Christotokos* (birth giver of Christ). Nestorian Christology was condemned by the council of *Ephesus* in 431.

<sup>39</sup> Those believing that they are of one will are called Monothelists.

<sup>40</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, pp. 466-7

<sup>41</sup> The triune god comprised of three equal persons is not found in the pre-Nicene literature. Justin (around 100-165 AD) stated that God is unnamed because names serve to distinguish one thing from another in the realm of the multiple and diverse existence, but since God is one and unique, he cannot be named in any way.

<sup>42</sup> *Psalms*: 89: 26-27

<sup>43</sup> See *Genesis*:6:2, *Job*:1:6 and 38:7

<sup>44</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 3, pp. 227-8

<sup>45</sup> John Hick for example in his *The Metaphor Of God Incarnate: Christology In A Pluralistic Age*. (Louise Ville: Westminster, 1994) p. 27 said that “divine incarnation... requires that an eternally pre-existent element of the godhead, God the Son, or the divine *logos*, became incarnate as a human being. But it is *extremely* unlikely that the historical Jesus thought of himself in any such a way. In deed he would probably have rejected the idea as blasphemous.” Furthermore, the contributors in *The Myth Of God Incarnate* mention that Jesus was a man approved by God and that the later Christian conception of him as God Incarnate the second person in the Trinity were a merely mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for humanity. Moreover, the existence of the non-Trinitarian churches is a historical fact.

<sup>46</sup> Mixing here stands for the ensuing ‘confusion’ of the two natures of Christ.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Ḥasan Bin Al-Batrīq

<sup>48</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 4 pp.355-8

<sup>49</sup> The Christians are not unanimous concerning the time the unification took place. Majority of them believe in his being eternal (i.e. he pre-existed his birth), just as the *logos* (God’s wisdom, speech) was with him from the beginning, as it is his attribute.

<sup>50</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*: 20:14

<sup>51</sup> This example is quoted from Justine who in turn quoted it from Philo who was middle Platonist Jew to demonstrate the relationship between God and the *logos*.

<sup>52</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, p. 323-5

<sup>53</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 4, p.324

<sup>54</sup> The soul-body relations equated with higher celestial relations is traceable in the metaphysics of Plato and the stoics. Plato believed that the world is created by the Craftsman who though not omnipotent creates the World Soul, which relates to the world in the same way the soul relates to the body. The stoics believed that God is the world soul who pervades the world.

<sup>55</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.4, pp.360-61

<sup>56</sup> This is similar to the platonic philosophy. “Plato explains that the world was created from chaotic matter by a god that he calls the Demiurge (literally ‘the Craftsman’). The Demiurge creates the World-Soul, which relates to the world in the same way that the human soul relates to the human body. Interestingly, the Demiurge is not omnipotent; he has to use the pre-existent chaotic matter to form the world and in this way Plato explains the imperfections in the world.” Thomas Edmund Gaston *Proto-Trinity: The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the First and Second Christian Centuries*, University of Birmingham Research Archive, e-theses repository, 2007 (unpublished).

<sup>57</sup>The Chalcedon Creed reads: Following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching humanity, like us in all things apart from sin; begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*, as touching humanity, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.(see *Investigating Christian Theology : Clergy Development Church of The Nazarene, Kansas City USA . 2003, p. 34*)

<sup>58</sup> It is written in the Bible ( *Deuteronomy*: 12-15)that “then the lord spoke to you [Moses] from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words but you saw no form...so watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the Day of the Lord.”

<sup>59</sup> See (*Job*: 9:11, *Mathew*:6: 6, *John*: 1:18, *Exodus*: 33:20, etc.)

<sup>60</sup> Authentic *hadīths* (although there is an opinion to the contrary) testify that on the night he (Muhammad) ascended to Heaven he did not see Allah.

<sup>61</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 4, p.315

<sup>62</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 4, p.377

<sup>63</sup> Stipulating material intermediaries is deeply rooted in middle Platonism. However, they needed such intermediaries because they believed that God is transcendent and therefore to deal with the material world such intermediaries are required. Justine denounced this and said that it was impossible that God left the super celestial realm to make Himself visible in a little spot of earth, a statement flagrantly opposing the notions of incarnation and Trinity.

<sup>64</sup> For the various meanings of the term, see *The Cambridge Dictionary Of Philosophy*, Second Edition Robert Audi Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 5

<sup>65</sup> *Al-Qur’ān* :7 : 180

<sup>66</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 5 pp. 54-55.

<sup>67</sup> *Deuteronomy*: 33:2

<sup>68</sup> In *Deuteronomy*: 4:12: God said to Moses “And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.”

<sup>69</sup> This is also a philosophical concept, related to the *logos*, clearly stated by Justine. He believes that the *logos* is issued from God, and held it to mean reason and wisdom.

<sup>70</sup> John 1:3 “Through him [Jesus] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” And more clearly this verse: “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Hebrews 1:2)

<sup>71</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.4, p.315

<sup>72</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*:43: 84

<sup>73</sup> *Al-Jawāb*’s translation entitled *Answering Those Who Altered The Religion Of Christ*, abridged by Ashshahhat Ahmad At-Tahan, rendered into English by Bayan Translation Services, p. 281

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 282

<sup>75</sup> Many acknowledge that the Christians are made to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity by their religious leaders, Even that means that they have to disable their reasoning faculty. For example, Robert Schmid writes in his article entitled “*The Triple Myth of The Trinity*” that “the fact that no one understands what that means, does not bother most [Christians], after all, their leaders, ministers, theologians and tradition confirm that to be a biblical fact that is to be believed, not understood.”

<sup>76</sup> There are many interpretations for the role of both Christ and the Satan in the crucifixion, and explanations for the intent and extent to which each was aware of the whole plan. However, the Bible contradicts what Ibn Taymiyyah said about the Christians in this regard. The Christians today as far as my knowledge goes do not believe that the Satan imprisoned the sinners in hell in the real sense of the word.

<sup>77</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.2, p.208

<sup>78</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*:4 :157-8

<sup>79</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*:5: 117

<sup>80</sup> *Al-Qur’ān* :5: 110

<sup>81</sup> see also *al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, p.439

<sup>82</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, pp. 361-341

<sup>83</sup> In *The Preaching of Peter* he said: “... we and the good Greeks worship the same God, though not according to perfect knowledge for they had not learned the tradition of the Son.

<sup>84</sup> Middle Platonism is the period of Platonism between Antiochus of Ascalon (c.130–68 B.C.) and Plotinus (A.D. 204–70). *Cambridge dictionary of philosophy*, second edition, Robert Audi Cambridge University Press

<sup>85</sup> See Thomas Edmund Gaston *Proto-Trinity: The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the First and Second Christian Centuries*, University of Birmingham Research Archive, e-theses repository, 2007 (unpublished).

<sup>86</sup> I *John*:4:2-3

<sup>87</sup> *Mathew*:28:19:

<sup>88</sup> Prophets in the Bible were called gods, as in *John* 10:34-36: “Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the



scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

<sup>89</sup>*Exodus:4 :22*

<sup>90</sup> God is entitled as father for many or all people. See *Deuteronomy :32:6* and *1:31*, *Exodus: 4:22*, *Isaiah: 63:166* and *64:8*, *Jeremiah:3:4*, *3:19* and *31:9*, *Psalms:68:5* and *103:13*. Thus, Christ being called the son of god is nothing new in the terminology of the Bible.

<sup>91</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, pp.133-4

<sup>92</sup> Ahmad Bin Ḥanbal: *Al-Musnad, ḥadīth* no. 17163

<sup>93</sup> Probably he means this verse in Habakkuk (3:3): God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise."

<sup>94</sup> *Isaiah:7:14*

<sup>95</sup> *Isaiah:9:6*

<sup>96</sup> *Isaiah:9:7*

<sup>97</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, pp.406-7

<sup>98</sup> *Luke :4 :11*

<sup>99</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, p. 442

<sup>100</sup> *Genesis:19:24*

<sup>101</sup> *'Psalms:110:1*

<sup>102</sup> *Psalms: 2:7*

<sup>103</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol.3, p.454

<sup>104</sup> *Luke:7: 20:*

<sup>105</sup> , *Luke:7:22:*

<sup>106</sup> *Mathew 4: 1-11.*

<sup>107</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 4, pp.108-9

<sup>108</sup> Cambridge dictionary of philosophy p. 44

<sup>109</sup> *Mathew:27:46*

<sup>110</sup> *Mathew:26:39*

<sup>111</sup> *Mathew:26:42*

<sup>112</sup>*Mathew:10:24*

<sup>113</sup> *Al-Jawāb* 4/135

<sup>114</sup> *John:11:41*

<sup>115</sup> *Acts:24:3:*

<sup>116</sup> *Mathew:20:23:*

<sup>117</sup> *Mathew:20:21:*

<sup>118</sup> *Luke:24:49:*

<sup>119</sup> He may be referring to this verse in *Genesis: 45:9*: “Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.”

<sup>120</sup> *Isaiah: 7:14:*

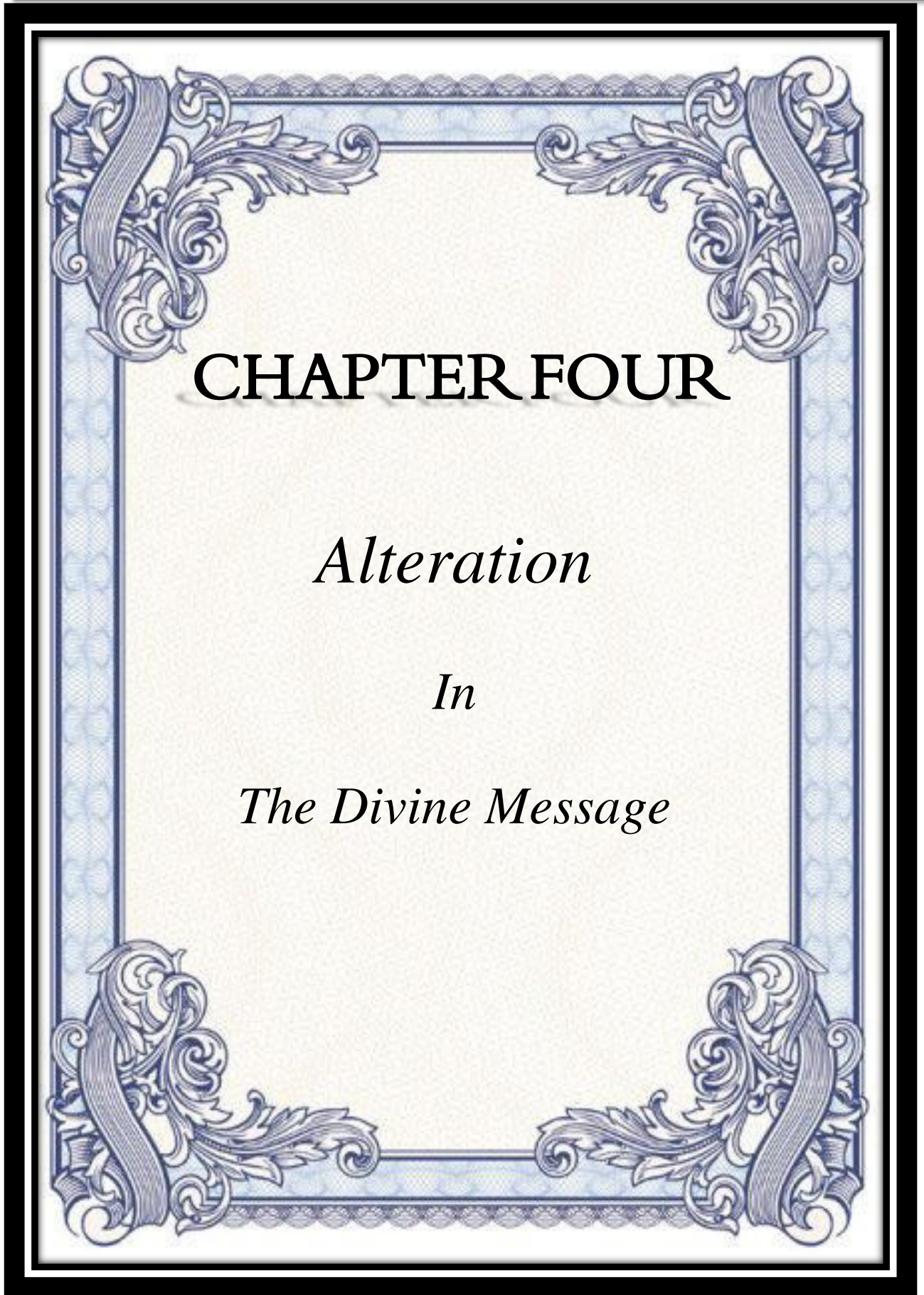
<sup>121</sup> This is also confirmed by English dictionaries.

<sup>122</sup> *Al-Jawāb* vol. 2, p.398

<sup>123</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhāri ḥadīth* no. 4482

<sup>124</sup> *Mathew:28:19*





# CHAPTER FOUR

*Alteration*

*In*

*The Divine Message*



## **4 . ALTERATION IN THE DIVINE MESSAGE**

The alteration in Christianity has been a common thesis discussed by many scholars who could observe the wide gulf separating the true divine teachings that are traditionally acknowledgeable and rationally reasonable, from the current enigmatic tenets of belief in Christianity. Minds (even from the Christian circles) that are not marred by preconceived notions and Trinitarian propensities have opposed Christian doctrines that have been incrementally augmenting over time. The subsequent additions and deletions that both the scripture and the religion suffered made this gap become larger. Therefore, alteration, as proved by Ibn Taymiyyah, has two aspects: the alteration through inventing new doctrines like the Trinity, incarnation, divinity of Christ, etc., and the alteration of the meaning of scriptural texts through translation and interpretation, which collaboratively influenced the Christian theology. Both these aspects that brought about changes in Christianity are probed into in this chapter.

Moreover, as the transmission of the Bible is another issue that sheds light on the authenticity and therefore authority of the Bible, Ibn Taymiyyah discusses it extensively, although it is apparently viewed secondary to the discussion of the interpretation and translation. The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and New Testament.<sup>1</sup> Although the Jews believe only in the so called Old Testament, they do not follow the versions followed by the Christians. Furthermore, given the plurality of Jewish sects, there are a number of versions accepted within the Jewish communities. Moreover, the Christian translation and interpretation of the Old Testament as part of their own scripture, has been adjusted within the Trinitarian paradigm and therefore they assigned to it meanings the Jews do not acknowledge.

### **4.1 Innovation in religion**

Throughout this voluminous work, (*al-Jawab*), Ibn Taymiyyah tries to prove the new additions the Christians have presumptuously introduced into the religion of Christ. The Christians on the other hand try to prove their stance through quoting the Quran,

as supporting their creeds and confirming the authenticity of their books. In response to this, Ibn Taymiyyah explores the Muslim exegetic literature to disprove this fallacy. In so doing, he proves that the Christians have severed all ties with Christ's message by inventing a totally new religion of their own making and therefore he considers them to be totally far from truth and as having committed the greatest form of disbelief. The Quran recurrently and discursively asserts their disbelief on the bases of their innovation and twisting the meaning of the texts to support their false allegations.

Ibn Taymiyyah identifies three reasons for the deviation of the Christians:

1. They abandoned the texts that are clear and categorical in favour of those which are ambiguous or allegorical.
2. They do not have a sound criterion to distinguish between the divine from the devilish miracles.
3. They reposed implacable trust in concocted narrations, as they possess no systematic technique of scrutinising these narrations. These are taken for granted and never subjected to authentication.

Apart from that, the Christians have no scriptural foundations for their dogmas. Their scriptural evidences are either not authentic or irrelevant to the topic of discussion. The whole Christian theological edifice is structured on untenable arguments.

In this chapter the Christians' allegations regarding the authenticity of their scripture and the validity of their doctrines and whether these are supported by the Quran are presented along with the responses of Ibn Taymiyyah.

#### **4.1.1 Changing the Monotheism**

Jesus was one of the mightiest messengers and faithful prophets, who made the propagation of monotheism (*tawhīd*) their major aim and devoted their whole lives to serving this purpose. The Quran expresses very plainly how Jesus was created with the word of Allah<sup>2</sup> and therefore he is called the word of Allah (being created purely by the word of Allah without any human/sexual intervention). However, after his

ascension, people deified him and even went as far as to make this one of the pillars of faith, without which faith is null and void. Even at this stage, the Quran communicates a dialogue in heaven between Allah and His messenger Jesus, wherein Allah questioned him if he ordered people to take him as god, which he denied outright.<sup>3</sup> Although Islam makes it obligatory and as a pillar of Islam to believe in Jesus and all the prophets, it states that divinity is the exclusive right of Allah. The concept of monotheism has a rigorous and strict meaning in Islam, allowing only a binary taxonomical classification of beings into godhead and creations, where the first position is occupied exclusively by Allah. It means that worship is the exclusive right of the Almighty. Worship again has a more inclusive meaning in Islam. All words and deeds and even thoughts that please Allah are types of worship that should be devoted exclusively to Allah. Thus, invocations and prayers, vows, seeking help or protection that Allah alone is able to afford, fear, hope, etc. are all types of worship that should be offered to Allah alone. This puts Islam (as prescribed to all the prophets in its pristine form) as the only religion loyal to this ideal. Judaism and Christianity are said to be monotheistic religions whereas they (as represented by the followers) have demolished the very bases of monotheism as they assign divine qualities to people. The Christians set up Jesus as God and son of God and the Jews believe Ezra son of God as reported in the Quran.<sup>4</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah made it his focal point to prove the wide difference between monotheism and the practices and doctrines the Christians brought in. What made this task easy is the Christian's vulnerable stance in this regard. The divinity and sonship of Christ are in patent contradiction to the purpose for which humanity in general was created, which is the pure worship to Allah; and the incarnation and Trinity oppose the oneness and transcendental nature of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah departed from the following propositions:

- The Quran stated plainly and condemned such practices as profaning Allah and setting up deities with him.
- The Bible proclaims the humanity, servitude, subservience and helplessness of Christ, and warns against those who innovate in religion.
- The whole textual packages the Christians depend on in this respect are either a human creation or misinterpretation.



- Their doctrines are not consistent with reason, and crush the very bases of monotheism.
- It is historical fact that it was too late that their current doctrines were canonised.

The bishops and archbishops of the various patriarchates assumed the rank of Allah and obtained for themselves the right to canonize any set of beliefs and doctrines in their ecumenical counsels. Such doctrines became instantly in force, and anyone who opposed them was excommunicated and cursed as a heretic.

Ibn Taymiyyah rallies many textual evidences available in the Quran and Bible, and supports that with historical facts and reason. As regards monotheism, Ibn Taymiyyah says:

For *tawhīd*, the Jews likened the Creator to His creation and blemished the Lord with qualities that befit the created. They said that Allah is poor, miser, and that He is susceptible to fatigue, etc. The Christians described the created with qualities of perfection that are special for the creator. They said that Christ created the heavens and the earth, and that he is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent... However, the Muslims were guided to truth by Allah in matters they differed. Therefore, they did not liken the creator to the created nor the created to the creator. Rather, they affirmed for Allah what He deserves of the qualities of perfection and glorified him high above all imperfections and affirmed that He is one having no similar or equal .... Thus they, unlike the Jews, glorified him high above defects and above similitude to creation unlike the Christians.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the Christians' error, as Ibn Taymiyyah has put it, emanated from their extremist reverence for persons. They initially erected Jesus as son of Allah through misinterpretation, although ordinary pious people are referred to as sons of God in the Bible, but not deified. The sonship of Christ, the union with the Father, the indwelling and the divinity of Christ were all introduced into Christianity formally in the time of Constantine<sup>6</sup>, the king of the Roman Empire in the fourth century after the demise of Christ. At that time the bishops were convened by the king to standardize doctrines to unite the Christians folks, under the Roman Empire. This council came in response to the pathetic disparity among the Christians.

Ibn Taymiyyah quoted the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said the Christians took their religious leaders as gods, since they legalized the illegal and prohibited the lawful. The institution and canonization of

certain articles in the Christian faith made their (canonical creeds') authority as divine, meaningless, for they are man-made. So, the deification of Christ was clearly intended by the Christians but they never felt that they deified the fathers of the church as well. Ibn Taymiyyah does not stop here. He elaborated on the issue and propounded that some factions deified Mary, the mother of Christ. Moreover, they made as gods the three persons of the Trinity. He said:

They associated with Allah the prophets and others below them. Therefore, they worshipped the Christ. Further, they took their priests and monks as gods apart from Allah. In addition, they made the disciples of Jesus messengers of God, and claimed that man is elevated to the status of the prophets by virtue of his good deeds; and as a result, they prayed to them and sought their intercession after their death. If a pious man among them dies, they build a temple on his grave, and draw images therein.<sup>7</sup>

As for the title 'God', Ibn Taymiyyah proved that the Bible made it the title of Moses and others too. Therefore, he concludes that the Christians did not understand the language of the Bible and took it literally. Their preconceptions blurred their vision to see that these terms are used figuratively. They quote the verses that state that Christ is God, lord and son to prove their points but at the same time they fail to see the same applied to other people too.

The enormity of the mistake in monotheism made Ibn Taymiyyah dwell the longest on this theme, and arrive at the conclusion that they worship many gods and therefore they are miserably different in understanding the very basics of their religion, and therefore deeply immersed in disbelief.

#### **4.1.2 Disgracing the Prophets**

The position of the prophets is another issue that needs to be highlighted here. The Jews humiliated the prophets and messengers of Allah. They calumniated them and ascribed to them even immorality and painted for them pornographic images in their Scripture. Further, they subjected some of them to abject and miserable torture and they put some others to death.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, the Christians hyperbolically revered some of them and went to extremes in that.<sup>9</sup> They even considered the apostles of Christ as infallible messengers of Allah. Moreover, they erected many of saints as gods through seeking their succour in dire circumstances. Islam, however, as it always

does, strikes a middle way in this respect between deification and humiliation. In Islam the prophets of Allah are venerated but not deified. Ibn Taymiyyah said:

For the Muslims, they were guided by His [Allah's] leave to truth in matters wherein they differed. They believed in all the prophets and did not discriminate between them. They did not go to extremes regarding them as the Christians did, nor fell too short of paying them the homage due to them, as did the Jews.<sup>10</sup>

The Muslims revere the Christ more than the Christians, as they believe in all that he said and do not alter his words or intent. Through wrong interpretation, the Christians introduced illogical and absurd themes into religion and when questioned about the logic thereof they would say that they are beyond reason or are unintelligible to human mind<sup>11</sup>. The best and the seal of the prophets, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), assumed the status of the messenger-slave, and it was the highest peak a prophet may reach. In contexts of praise in the Quran he was described as such<sup>12</sup>. He and Noah, Ibrahim, Moses and Jesus were called the mightiest of the messengers of Allah as the Quran puts it.<sup>13</sup> But none of these was ever called god, nor son, nor lord, for the biblical usage of the terms 'god', 'father', 'son' 'lord' and the like created problems for humanity. Ibn Taymiyyah invited the Christians to read the Bible in the correct context and perspective. Many scholars of the Bible acknowledge that the Bible propounded that the context of the writers rather than the actual contexts overcame its presentation. It is mainly because of misreading, misconceptualization and adamant insistence on trinitarianism that the Christians ended up with many gods in a supposedly monotheistic religion.

In addition, in Islam it is a precondition of counting any as a Muslim that he or she should believe in all the prophets indiscriminately. Moreover, part of this belief is to believe in their being infallible, which makes their actions and sayings absolutely true and exemplary for their respective peoples. Having this status they should be obeyed. This necessarily implies that their ordinances are not contradictory. On the basis of this logic their message is the same. All of them urged their respective peoples to worship none save Allah. Anyone denying or speaking badly about any of the prophets is immediately judged as a disbeliever. The followers of other faiths after the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are bound by this rule. They are all unsalvageable from the torments of the hellfire, in which they would

dwell permanently, if they do not follow Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is because disbelieving in one of the prophets is tantamount to disbelieving in all, given the unity of their message. Therefore, the Quran contains many texts affirming the disbelief of the People of the Book (the Jews and the Christians), since they denied some of the prophets of Allah.<sup>14</sup>

#### **4.1.3 Playing with the Divine Ordinances**

Christ is quoted even in the Bible as to say to his people that he did not come to change the law.<sup>15</sup> The law here refers to the legal system in the Torah, which was given to Moses. In the Quran, it is stated several times that Christ came to confirm, not to change the Torah.<sup>16</sup> However, he is also quoted to have said that he came to make lawful some unlawful items previously prohibited in the Torah. In other words, he came to slightly modify the legal injunctions of the Torah. The Quran reports the Christ as saying: “And I have come confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful to you part of what was forbidden to you, and I have brought to you a proof from your lord, so fear Allah and obey me.”<sup>17</sup>

The response of the population that Jesus addressed was diverse: the followers of Christ accepted the institution and later went even further in error and aberration when they believed that their fathers have the right to abrogate even what Christ brought. But the Jews rejected it all, for they denied abrogation. They thought that the modification vitiates the authority of the commandments in the Torah. Thus biblical as well as Quranic references testify to the fact that Christ did not bring a totally new law but adopted the law brought by Moses. Therefore, there are slight changes in legislation between the books revealed to Moses and Christ. The Muslims were balanced in this regard and believed that Allah has the exclusive right to modify his law through the prophets whenever He wishes. Therefore, we should believe in what Allah revealed to Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), even when the successor prophet changes items in the law of his predecessors. Since all come from Allah, we should accept them indiscriminately, as this is part of their message. Otherwise, man has no right to abrogate any of the creator’s law brought by the prophets.

### *Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message*

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As regards legislation, the Jews were extremists. They prohibited the good things and went to extremes regarding impurities to the extent that they prohibited eating with the woman who is in her menstrual cycle or even staying with her in the same house.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, certain fats<sup>19</sup> as well as certain animals with cleft hooves are prohibited and many other things.<sup>20</sup> With these constraints on diet made obligatory upon the Jew, Christ made lawful for them some of what has been prohibited for them, as a sign of mercy from Allah. However, they believed that Allah does not abrogate anything after endorsing it. Right to the other sharp extreme, the Christians took everything as lawful including wine, pork, and all animals. They also considered everything as pure including urine, and the like, and repealed circumcision. They, unlike the Jews, as regards abrogation, believed it to be the prerogative of their bishops to abrogate even divine commandments, as they did many times in all their ecumenical councils (the first one being that of Nicaea in 325 CE), wherein they totally changed their religion and associated others with Allah in His lordship and godhead. Moreover, they also adulated the Cross, on which Christ was believed to have been crucified.

The Muslims, however, were guided in the matters wherein they differed, and Allah made lawful for them all good things and prohibited all obnoxious and abominable things and removed the restrictions and constraints that yoked the children of Israel, (unlike the case of the Jews) and commanded them to be pure and clean from all kinds of impurities, unlike the Christians. Generally speaking, Ibn Taymiyyah notes, Christendom are inclined towards accepting falsehood, such as the Trinity, the union and the indwelling; and the Jewry are characterized by rejecting the truth and maligning the prophets.

In addition, in their commitment to falsehood and being so deeply immersed in error and bigotry, they condemn and curse anyone asking them for fair judgment regarding things they innovated in religion. It is always the way of the biased individuals of all social strata and scholars of various ideologies. The Christians' extremist stance on the person of Christ is motivated with the same things that motivate some Muslims sects which highly and unduly glorified their saints and leaders, such as Ali bin Abi Tālib, who is deified by some of the Ismailis. They face the incessant demand for evidences that prove their opinions with supposing that these issues are

incomprehensible. Ibn Taymiyyah recurrently differentiates between bringing something incomprehensible and bringing something known to all to be impossible. In other words, there is a big difference between what is unreasonable and what is impossible to fully comprehend. What the Christians innovated falls into the first category.

During the time of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the Torah according to Ibn Taymiyyah had enough guidance to lead the Jews, since the Quran tells Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about this fact. Allah says, “How come they unto thee for judgement when they have the Torah, wherein Allah hath delivered judgement (for them)? Yet even after that they turn away. Such (folk) are not believers.”<sup>21</sup> The same thing is said about the Gospel which the Quran tells their followers to make their judgements according to them. Allah says in the Quran, “and let the people of the gospel judge on the bases of what Allah has revealed in it.”<sup>22</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah is of the view that this reference is valid in matters where the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) have the same judgements. The Christians were bound by the Law of Moses unless such rules were abrogated by the Christ. Likewise the matters that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) abrogated, should not be followed, even though they may be there in the pre-abrogation revealed book. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that what remains in the Gospels today contains enough light to lead its followers to the truth that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the last messenger of Allah and therefore they have to follow him, although he admits that what remains today in the Bible as regards the law is mostly the Christians’ invention. Allah says in the Quran in describing some sections of the People of the Book, (particularly the followers of Moses) thus: “those who follow the unlettered Prophet whom they find written in the Torah and the Gospel...”<sup>23</sup> this unlettered prophet is Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is also clearly stated that the Quran is the book dominating all other scriptures. The Quran says, “And we have sent down to you [Prophet Muhammad] the book in truth confirming the books before it and dominant over them. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you...”<sup>24</sup>

#### **4.1.4 Monasticism**

Another aspect that the Christians introduced, as Ibn Taymiyyah puts forward, is monasticism. Ibn Taymiyyah says it is a sheer innovation. It has no place in the teachings of Christ. The Christians take a Quranic verse as a plea for the lawfulness of their monasticism. The verse is "...and we *ja'alnā* (made, placed), in the hearts of those who followed him, compassion and mercy. But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, we did not prescribe for them, but they sought only to please Allah therewith, but they did not observe it with the right observance. So we gave those who believed their due reward, but many of them are rebellious." <sup>25</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah propounds that Allah in this verse praises those who followed Christ and whom Allah has bestowed with mercy and compassion. Monasticism is stated to be invented by the Christians. Then those who followed the prophets and did not change their religion are praised in the verse unlike the rebellious innovators. Thus, the verse does not praise the Christians for monasticism, according to Ibn Taymiyyah.

Some interpret the verse to mean that Allah made in their hearts mercy, compassion and monasticism, and this is supported by face-value reading. However, Ibn Taymiyyah rejects this interpretation on the following grounds:

- Monasticism was not practiced by the early Christians; the disciples did not practise it. It was invented later unlike the mercy and compassion, which were in the hearts of all those who followed Christ.
- Allah has said that they invented monasticism unlike the mercy and compassion, which are 'made' in their hearts.
- Mercy and compassion are things related exclusively to hearts, whereas monasticism is not related to hearts. Therefore, it cannot be subsumed under the verb 'made'.

Again some interpret it to mean that Allah did not prescribe it for them except for the pleasure of Allah. Others take it to mean that they did not do it except for the pleasure of Allah. Ibn Taymiyyah rejects this interpretation on the following grounds:

- The monasticism was not prescribed at all as the verse plainly states that it was invented.

- When Allah ordains anything, He does not do that in order to seek His own pleasure. It is people who do whatever they do for this purpose.
- Why monasticism in particular is referred to as something that is ordained for the pleasure of Allah? The verse does not mention things initially ordained, what to speak of monasticism?
- To say that they did not do it except to seek the pleasure of Allah does not necessarily entail any praise for them, for nothing can avail Allah's pleasure unless it is ordained by him.

#### **4.1.5 The Crucifixion**

The crucifixion is another issue Ibn Taymiyyah touches while exploring the Christians' doctrines. He follows the Quran in this regard and propounds that the Christ was not crucified but a substitute was. The Quran states that: "... they did not kill nor crucify him; but another was made to resemble him (and they killed that man not Christ). And in the succeeding verse Allah tells that He raised Jesus to Himself.<sup>26</sup>

The Christians, instead of condemning this inhumane attempt to kill the innocent prophet of Allah, venerated the Cross and made it their motto which they believe to be part of their identity. They hang it in their necks and attribute to it much good. In the time of the Roman emperor Constantine, this Cross was allegedly discovered by Helen, the mother of Constantine. She travelled to Jerusalem and reached the place where the Cross was buried and made excavations and discovered a number of crosses. A test was conducted to identify the Cross, on which Christ was crucified. The healing of a sick person was the test applied. They brought an ill person and put the crosses individually on him. Only one of them could heal the illness. That was therefore identified as the Cross they were searching for.

Long before that, her son, the emperor, saw in His dream, while the war between him and his rivals was ablaze, that he would be granted victory over his enemies through the cross which he saw in the sky. That allegedly was his own claim which induced him into formalising Christianity in his kingdom, and entitled him later to play a vital role in the forming of their religion. Ibn Taymiyyah more emphatically attributes much of the alteration of the Christian religion to this emperor. He, with his pagan



background entered into the fold of Christianity but without recanting his previous beliefs. This, along with the long contact of Christianity with the Helens caused many Roman doctrines to be fossilised in Christianity. That is why Ibn Taymiyyah says that the heresies the Christians are upholding now originated from paganism. He says that their religion is a mixture of Roman beliefs and prophetic guidance.

## **4.2 Alterations in the Scripture**

In the previous sections, alterations in religion have been discussed. The second aspect of alteration is the scripture. Here, an attempt is made to deal with the ways the Christian scripture was transmitted and how well they match the standards of authenticity.

### **4.2.1 Transmission of the Bible**

Ibn Taymiyyah held that the Torah was originally handed down from Allah to the Prophet Moses all at once. However, it was lost by the passage of time. The lands of the Jews underwent apocalyptic attacks from different kings who meant to destroy the lands of the Jews and ransack them. The transmission of the Torah, he asserts, was interrupted when Jerusalem was destroyed. It is said later that this transmission of the Torah was resumed when a man called Ezra re-dictated it. People differed who this man could be. Some are of the opinion that he was a prophet; others believed he was not a prophet. His copy is said to have been compared with an antique copy and found identical.

This, Ibn Taymiyyah negates, cannot safeguard against error, especially when we know that it was not memorized like the Quran by almost all followers. The transmission of one, two or three is not enough to consider what they transmitted authentic. Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah refutes the authenticity claim through this historical examination, which historians acknowledge. The assaults of the Babylonian, the Persian and the Roman kings played a great role in sacking cities wherein the followers of Moses and Jesus lived, practiced their religions and kept their religious books. As these kings were averse to the religion per se, they would leave no stone unturned to destroy everything pertaining to religion. Therefore, temples were destroyed at times, the holy books were burned and religious people were killed.

Therefore, their knowledge, preservation and practice of their religions must have suffered as a result. Moreover, the Christian historians acknowledge that apart from the fact that the Torah was collected in written form long after the demise of Moses, (although it is believed by some to have written some portions of the Exodus and some laws for the community) it took roughly half a century to be completed. Dennis Bratcher in his book entitled *The Development of the Bible* (page one) writes:

However, it is likely that the Bible actually began to take shape as Scripture later as the earliest written traditions began to be collected into books about the time of Solomon, around 1000 BC. The Old Testament in roughly the form that we know it did not emerge until after the return from Babylonian exile around 500-450 BC.

The Christian scholars admit that the Bible as is seen in the present form developed over two thousand years. This is not as regards writing it in books only but revelation is given more protracted period outliving the prophets themselves.<sup>27</sup> Some of the books at times were considered as part of the scripture then discoveries of older manuscripts led to either modification or exclusion of the previous books. One such book is the Preaching of Peter, and the Apocrypha. This is also true with respect to the different versions of the Bible. The grave defects in the King James version of the Bible, for example, called for its revision.

Ibn Taymiyyah seems indifferent regarding the time when the Torah was written. What concerns him is the interrupted transmission whether oral or written. He considers it sufficiently authentic if concomitantly transmitted<sup>28</sup> either orally or in a written form. This is actually the standard set in Islamic scholarship in the scrutiny of *ḥadīth*. A *ḥadīth* thus transmitted is considered authentic. It should also be noted that he equates the Gospels with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in that they both are merely reports of the prophets' words and deeds.

The status of the Gospels, in his view, is even weaker for it was not written down nor dictated by Jesus; it was only after the ascension of Christ that the apostles who accompanied Jesus, namely, John and Mathew wrote their accounts of Jesus, which they admit are not exhaustive of his words and deeds (see John:21:25). Moreover, they did not claim that Christ conveyed them as God's word. They admit them as their

personal accounts of the life of Christ—what he said and did.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, they are very much like writing the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)<sup>30</sup>. They are mere accounts made by people subject to scrutiny. Not many people memorized or recorded them. What is worse, Mark and Luke did not see the Christ. After all, the narration of two or three is liable to error, especially when we consider their confusion in the man crucified; was he the Christ or not, and whether he was God or not, although Christ is the focal point of the entire Christendom.

Ibn Taymiyyah makes a comparison between the way the Quran was transmitted and the way their books were transmitted. He highlights a very crucial difference. That is of the *isnād* (the study of the continuity of the line of narrators). This is a science in Islamic scholarship wherewith the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* narration is scrutinized. The Muslims have developed this meticulous technique on the bases of which they judge the authenticity or otherwise of any narration. This involves the study of the men who transmitted the *ḥadīth*: whether they are trustworthy or not, whether they perfectly preserved the *ḥadīth* they narrated, in memory or records, whether the chain of the narrators is broken or not, the phraseology involved to signify the way the *ḥadīth* was received, etc. All these guard against fabrication and forgery. However, the Christians do not possess such investigative techniques. Moreover, the Prophet has testified that his *ummah* will not agree on error, a testimony the Christians did not obtain for themselves. Rather, they agreed in error when they belied the Christ and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon both of them). Further, thousands of people transmitted the Quran whereas a relatively small number of people transmitted the Bible (in translation).

In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah highlights another criterion for the authenticity of narration. That is, whether it was concomitantly transmitted. This, he mentions to prove the authenticity of the Quran and show the superiority of it over the rest of the so-called divine books. The Christians boast, as Ibn Taymiyyah puts it, that their scripture is written in seventy-two tongues<sup>31</sup>; therefore, change is not feasible with this great number. Ibn Taymiyyah rightly refutes this by referring to the language the Christ spoke. He says that the language Christ spoke was Hebrew. It was later that it was translated in other tongues. Furthermore, he says it is common knowledge that

the copies available in the hands of the Jews, Christians, and Samaritans are obviously different.<sup>32</sup> They are not identical copies. This testifies to the fact that change is necessarily there in their respective scriptures. More, it is impossible to find anyone who claims to have mastered seventy-two languages, checked the copies in the world, and concluded that they are identical. On the contrary, it is enough to find some of the copies different to judge the change, which actually what people came to observe. The copies of the Psalm are even worse in this regard as the change there is more prevalent. He says that he himself saw some of the copies of the Psalms in which Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was mentioned by name as a prophet, whereas in the other copies there is no mention of him. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah reaches the conclusion that changes in their scripture can easily be proven through observation and comparison. The laxity and leniency in taking matters of religion made their standards of scrutinizing authenticity and validity incredibly low.

Ibn Taymiyyah uses the correct yardstick to ascertain the alteration in the text. With the difference in the texts available with the different Christian sects and those with the Jews and the Samaritans, no claim of originality remains valid. Moreover, if the change is only in the words, given the different translations then it would not create such confusion, but the difference is actually in the meaning, too. Even contemporarily, whole verses are being expunged from time to time,<sup>33</sup> and some of them are reinstated after being obliterated. Other verses are modified; hence, the multiplicity of the versions of the Bible.

The Christians, as Ibn Taymiyyah tells us, hold that the people received the scripture from the apostles, (who were, according to them, messengers of God) each in his respective tongue. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the following arguments to refute this claim:

- If these narrations/copies are not concomitantly transmitted, they become an invalid source of knowledge.
- This is a big lie. Many nations did not receive any gospel in their language such as the Arabs. The Arabic versions were translated from Hebrew, Roman and Syriac. The first translation of the Torah into Arabic was in the tenth century.

- The Christian gospels are only four, written by four people, two of whom saw Christ whereas two did not see him. This is not concomitance in narration that guards against forgery. The tongues in which the gospels were narrated came after these four apostles. The apostles did not speak seventy tongues.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the apostles were not infallible. The Christians do not claim that they are prophets. Therefore, they are prone to mistake.
- In the content of these books are clear proofs in stark opposition to the wrong allegations they made, such as the Trinity, incarnation, divinity of Christ, etc. One should not abandon clear proofs in favor of ambiguous statements.
- Supposing it is true that the Bible is available in seventy-two languages, each language would have many copies, making it difficult to say that all copies are identical and are still in the form they received them from the apostles.

After this, Ibn Taymiyyah holds a comparison between the Quran and the Bible in terms of their transmission. In the transmission of the Quran people did not depend on the copies they had. They depended mostly on their memorization, something individuals in the Christian faith hardly ventured to do, not to speak of big numbers of people. Therefore, Muslims were able to correct any mistake in any of the copies of the people, unlike the Christians. Further, they did not preserve the words verbatim only, they also preserved the script (the orthographic system); that is, how single words should be written. This manifests the superiority of the Quran in its authenticity over any other book. Therefore, if this is true in the case of the Torah, which is the most authentic part of the Bible, what to say about the gospels! Ibn Taymiyyah builds on this conclusion that if the books with the Jews and Samaritans are different from those with the Christians, this means the Christians did not take from the same source, and thereby authenticity is affected.

#### **4.2.2 Interpretation of the Bible**

Apart from the mistakes in narration, the Christians mistook also in interpreting their books. Ibn Taymiyyah highlights their difference in the meaning they ascribe to the specific texts. Difference in interpretation led naturally to difference in theology. When they mistook in interpreting the meanings of terms such as the Word Of God,

the Son of God, the personification of some abstract things, the use of allegorical expressions (like baptismal formula) and the like, they were led astray in many cardinal issues pertaining to the understanding of Godhead, which is the most important thesis in any religion. Interestingly, in Christianity no name is known for God. By this they are equally entrenched in disbelief as the Jews since they disbelieved in what Moses and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon both of them) brought. The leading bishops concocted creeds that are not sanctioned by the previous prophets or Christ. Therefore, they differed with the rest of the bishops of their time and charged them of altering the scripture. All those who did not accept the creeds made by the dignitaries in the ecumenical councils were anathematized as heretics or even heresiarchs. This easily leveled charge governed the judgments against the Jews, who in turn charged them of confusion and change. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that the Jew, Christians and Muslims are all unanimous that the scriptures of the Christians underwent alteration. He further says that scriptures contain news and commandments. The news should be believed and the commandments should be carried out. The People of the Book discredited much of their news and violated many of their commandments. In addition, each sect proves this condition in the other sects.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, in response to the Christians' claim that the Muslims believe that all the copies of the Bible were altered after the advent of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); he said that this claim is baseless, as the Muslims cannot prove it. They cannot carry out a global survey to make this generalization. The Muslims believe that change is undeniable but not necessarily in all the copies on the earth. The Muslim scholars are unanimous that alteration is in interpretation and meaning. As regards the change in words after the spread of copies around, however, Muslims are different. Some of the Muslim scholars are of the opinion that they were not changed; many of the Muslim scholars and the Christians viewed that only some of the words are changed. Some of the People of the Book even believe that altered words are more than those in the original form, especially in the New Testament, wherein change is more prevalent and which many scholars are of the opinion that only a small portion is God's word. Therefore, the Gospel which is the word of God is not the one available now.

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However, it should be noted here that when he talks about the change after the massive spread of copies, as viewed by some Muslims is not in word, they do not mean that the Bible is God's word. Rather, what they mean is that at a particular time all the copies of the Bible are similar. What consolidates this view is the fact that it is inevitable that all Bibles available are mere translations (which are naturally influenced by the translators' preconceived notions<sup>36</sup>, and the original copies are non-existent or even not written, not to speak of the successive revisions carried out for the Bible. That is why there are many versions of the Bible. Talking about the revisions made to the Old Testament, Peter J. Gentry observed "The process of making systematic, thoroughgoing revisions...continued from possibly 200 BC through AD 200."<sup>37</sup> As late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century the King James Version of the Bible is said to contain grave defects. This called for the modification and correction carried out by the Bible scholars, and as a result, many versions of the Bible have been produced.

Moreover, the Torah in the hands of the people now contains commandments and judgments of Allah, although it witnessed a change in the words. He quotes the Quran (5:41-42) where it is stated that the Jews altered the word of God and in the next verse it exclaims why the Jews should come to you [Muhammad] when they have Allah's judgment in the Torah. He concluded that the Torah that outlived the sack of Jerusalem, the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, the ministry of the Christ and the mission of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) have these two characteristics (alteration and preservation of commandments). And the copies available at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were preponderantly in agreement concerning words, where we can find slight change across copies just as the case of the copies of the *ḥadīth* books. For the commandments, there is hardly any Muslim claiming the change in text, although that they are unanimous that the Torah has undergone tremendous change. The calumniations against the prophets are clear indications of the change.

As of the Gospels, he quotes the Quran: 5:47 where it is stated that the people of the Gospels are ordered to follow its judgment. This testifies to the fact that it still contains God's judgment and commandment but does not guard against the change in the news. The change in text occurred in the news more.

Ibn Taymiyyah also quotes a counter argument the Muslim scholars propose: that the verse ordering the Christians to judge according to their Gospels was valid only before the coming of . This he accepts and opines that this is in agreement with the other reading of the verse. However, he says that they are ordered to follow the judgment of their books where they are not abrogated by commandments of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is in keeping with known rule the Muslim scholars have formulated, which reads, “The law of those before us is a law for us unless it is abrogated by our religion.” The Quran speaks about itself to be confirming but dominating the previous books.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, he says that the Quran is considered as the judge and witness over the other scriptures.

The question that arises here is that whether Ibn Taymiyyah considers the Bible God’s word or not? He states that the narration of two or three is not enough to render the narration sound and reliable. He also said that long after the ascension of Christ the apostles started writing the gospels, which are not God’s word but accounts of the words and deeds of Christ, which contains enough guidance to lead them to the right path. He believes that the Bible if read without presumptions will surely act as a path to truth which lies in Islam. He further declares that the change occurred in news is more than in the commandments.<sup>39</sup> He is most probably motivated by stories such as ascribed to the prophets, which humiliate rather than honor them. The crucifixion, the incarnation, the divinity of Christ, the inherited sin, the story of the devil and the like belong to this category. These issues made Christianity totally against the principle of *tawhīd*. It is by virtue of this that it became at variance with Islam as a genre. In short, he acknowledges that although the transmission was interrupted and the apostles did not claim to exhaust his tradition, still it is sufficient in leading to the truth which is Islam. He further points out that many texts in the Bible refer to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as the one prophet prophesied by the Christ.

It should be noted also that whenever Ibn Taymiyyah quotes or refers to the gospels he never mentions the epistles of Paul. He is totally aware of him. Yet he does not mention him probably because he did not consider him as a Christian but an enemy to Christianity given his enmity prior to his ostensible conversion. More, Ibn Taymiyyah does not believe in theophany in any religion.



### **4.2.3 Criteria for Authenticity**

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, to examine the veracity and authenticity of any narrated text, a set of standards should be observed:

- That it is transmitted through a continuous chain. The chain of narrators should not be broken. However, for heavenly books, the narrators should be so many that it is clear that they cannot collectively concoct a lie, such as when they are dispersed and no one knows of the other, and produce exactly the same thing.
- The trustworthiness of the narrators
- If such text is merely a translation, as in the case of the Bible, such translation should be precisely like the original.
- It should be interpreted according to the intent of the author, not the intent of the translator.

The response Ibn Taymiyyah made, checks the Bible against all these standards. He asserts that the Torah was lost after the destruction of Jerusalem. Someone rewrote it later. This person is not well known so as to ascertain his trustworthiness, nor is he enough to narrate a heavenly book, being only one. A big number of people are needed to concomitantly transmit it, in a manner that makes it impossible for them to agree on error. The suggestion here is that the two first standards are not satisfied in the Torah.

As for the gospels, they are accounts written by ordinary people who are not immune against error. The gospels written by the apostles are no exception. The apostles are not prophets to say that they are infallible, and to accept whatever they say. They are at best messengers of Christ.

In addition, when the Christians quote the previous prophets they need four things:

- To prove the prophethood of such people;
- To know the exact words they said;
- To prove the correctness of the translation of their sayings;
- The intent of the prophets should not be marred by misinterpretation.

Although Ibn Taymiyyah never quoted from the epistles of Paul, he discusses the alleged visions he saw. It is a very dangerous thing to canonize the epistles of someone who is, apart from being once the avowed enemy of Christ, an ordinary man claimed to have seen Christ. By virtue of this alleged vision he became an apostle whose messages were taken for granted as infallible guidance from the Christ. Knowledge about Allah should not be taken so lightly. Scrupulous investigation should be carried out. Single narration is naturally inauthentic, or at least undependable. Ibn Taymiyyah believes that such vision cannot be from God. Everyone can claim to have this vision and distort religion in the way one wishes. This leads us to the conclusion that whatever Ibn Taymiyyah says regarding the authenticity of the Bible, he does not consider the epistles of Paul as part of that. He did not bother to discuss the authenticity of these epistles because he said that if Paul did really have a vision of something, it was a devil.<sup>40</sup> Devils do appear to people to misguide them off the right path.<sup>41</sup> Some Muslims had a vision of something assuming itself to be God, telling them that they were exempt from all religious responsibilities. God will not make such a declaration as He cannot be seen in this world and because He never declares any to be exempt from his duties including the prophets and the angels, what to say about ordinary people.

#### **4.2.4 Interpreting of Quran by Christians**

The Christians, in their hard endeavor to substantiate the authenticity of their doctrines, tried to interpret some of the verses of the Quran in such a manner as to suit their theology. Here a set of the verses they quoted for this purpose will be presented along with the meanings, they assigned to them and Ibn Taymiyyah's answer to counteract them.

- **Well-guided community before the Prophet Muhammad** (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): They quoted the verse (3:113) wherein Allah praises that section of the People of the Book as being still pious believers. This, Christians claim, is a divine testimony for the soundness of their religion. Ibn Taymiyyah tells them that the term 'People of the Book' includes the Jews as well the Christians<sup>42</sup>, whereas the Muslims and the Christians agree that the Jews are non-believers. Furthermore, The Quran praises those who followed Moses in other verses such as in (8:159) where it

is stated that of the people of Moses is a community that leads with truth and establish justice therewith. Therefore, he further tells them that the verse means those who believed in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as in the verse (3:199) which reads: “verily, there are among the People of the Book those who believe in Allah and what has been revealed to you.”<sup>43</sup> This verse, he clarifies to them, speaks about, as the majority of the exegetes of the Quran say, the Negus, the Abyssinian king and the like who believed in Prophet Muhammad’s message but were not able to migrate to him, due to the office they were occupying among the disbelievers. Faithfully, Ibn Taymiyyah quotes the other opinions too, which reads to the effect that the verse refers to all the People of the Book who believed in the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the Quran would not have called them the People of the Book just in the same case when it does not refer to the pagans after embracing Islam as pagans but as Muslims.

- **Vindication from *Shirk* (Polytheism).** Present day skeptics also claim that the verse advocates religious pluralism. The verse is “verily those who believe and those who are Jews, Christian, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds shall have their reward from their lord and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”<sup>44</sup> They say this is clear proof of the Quran’s recognition of the Christian theology as being valid even after the commission of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) . Ibn Taymiyyah states that the verse does not support this claim since it equates them to the Jew and the Sabians, whereas the Christians and the Muslims agree that the Jews are non-believers since they disbelieved in the Christ. Secondly, if the verse does not praise the Jews, it similarly does not praise the Christians. Ibn Taymiyyah reports that the verse addresses the followers of prophets who followed the pristine and valid guidance, before they were abrogated by successive divine messages and before the alteration. Therefore it includes those who followed them before alteration and abrogation. He further elaborates that the People of the Book are not part or those who believed in Allah and the Day of Judgment and also were not part of those who did good deeds.<sup>45</sup>

Rather, Allah says in the Quran, “fight against those who did not believe in Allah and the day of judgment, nor forbid what Allah and His messenger has made prohibited, and those who did not acknowledge the religion of truth [Islam] among the People of the Book until they pay the *jizyah* with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.”<sup>46</sup> The Quran is clear that people of Trinity, those who said that God is Jesus Christ are those of the Christians and Jews who claimed they were the most beloved by Allah, are disbelievers. He also addressed them saying that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is sent to them also after along interval of divine message.<sup>47</sup> It also is clear that the Christians are disbelievers.

- **Bound to follow Muhammad** (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): The Christians brought forth the argument that the book that is revealed to this man (Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) speak of him as having no firm belief in what he preached. For this, they quote the Quran to support their freedom from following him. In this connection they quote verse (34:24) which can be translated thus, “and we and you are rightly guided or in plain error.” This, they say, tell very clearly the uncertainty of Muhammad in his religion. They also quote "I do not know what will be done with me and with you." (46:9) Ibn Taymiyyah assertively propounds that the Quran is full of the commandments that order and invite them to follow the Prophet. Moreover, he was commanded to fight them, and he did carry out the commandment. He fought them to either convert or succumb to his rule. As for the apparent uncertainty in the discourse is another way of stating that the disbelievers are unjust and erroneous. It is similar to the case of two opposing parties, one just and the other is an oppressor. The former may at some situation say to the latter that either of us is unjust you or I. This is as to say that the unjust of us has become easily recognizable. This is a fair manner of expression. As for the prophet not knowing the recompense going to happen to him and the disbelievers, this Ibn Taymiyyah admits that the prophet does not know the unseen future unless informed by Allah.
- **Christians are blessed.** The Christians, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, claim that the faction or group referred to in the first chapter of the Quran as the blessed or those endowed with grace, are the Christians. However, he

considers this one of the biggest calumnies since the Quran is very clear in considering them as nonbelievers, ignorant and astray in several places in the Quran. As the context of the verse puts it, it orders the Muslims to seek Allah's guidance and help in following the path of those bestowed with His grace. If those were the Christians then the Prophet and his nation would seek to follow the religion of the Christians. Furthermore, if Jesus is stated in the Quran to be one of those blessed, there is no plea for them in that since this applies to other prophets.

- **Referred to as guidance even in the Quran:** Moreover, in the second verse in the second chapter of the Quran, which reads, "this is the book wherein there is no doubt, (being) guidance for the pious," refers, according to the Christians, to the Christians and their book. Ibn Taymiyyah says if the Christians tried to thus interpret the Quran, the interpretation of which has been concomitantly transmitted from the Prophet himself, what to say of their interpretation of their book which were not transmitted so credibly? This is a clear proof that they changed the scripture at their disposal. Ibn Taymiyyah affirms that this verse refers to the Quran and there is no mention of their books in this verse nor the contexts supports it.

The conclusion derived by Ibn Taymiyyah is that the Christians wish to alter and twist the meaning of the Quran in the same manner as they did with the Bible. He said<sup>48</sup> that these Christians followed in their manipulation of the Quran the same method as they did with the Torah and the Gospel. They abandon the entirely clear texts which have only one possible meaning and adhere to allegorical texts suggesting many meanings, though they may contain meanings contrary to what they advocate. It is they and their like, who are meant in the verse,

He it is who sent down to you the scripture wherein entirely clear verses; these are the substance of the scripture, and (sent down) others that are allegorical. Those with aberration in their hearts follow the allegorical, seeking dissension. No one knows the meaning thereof save Allah. The people well rooted in knowledge say we have believed in it; all is from our lord. (Quran: 3:7)

- **The churches praised in the Quran:** They quote this verse (22:40) "Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah. For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of

others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Verily Allah helps one who helps Him. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty. The Christians say that the Quran speaks highly of our churches as places wherein the name of Allah is mentioned much. Ibn Taymiyyah repudiates this by saying that the mentioning of the name of Allah is mentioned just after the mosques, which are exclusively the Muslims'. This necessarily tells us either that the name of Allah is mentioned there only or that this includes the temples of the non-Muslims before the commission of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), or before alteration and abrogation. Again, he faithfully quotes the counter arguments of the Muslim scholars. He quotes al-Ḍaḥḥāk who was a great authority in *tafsir* as saying that Allah likes to be remembered even by those who commit *shirk*. That is, the one who associates others with Allah is better than the one who insolently denies the existence of Allah.

This makes him conclude that the People of the Book are better than the pagans. This conclusion is true if checked against the other verses of the Quran. The Quran never praises the People of the Book who did not believe in the message of and follow the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). On the contrary, it considers them as disbelievers who deviated from the guidance of prophets. However, in the context of comparison, the Quran prefers the least of the two evils. He says when the Romans were defeated by the Persians, the companions of the Prophet were upset because the Romans were people of divine scripture closer to truth than the Persians were. Therefore, if the Persians destroy such temples, it is an evil; if the Muslims who will establish mosques in their places destroy it, it is better. It depends on whether the religion is closer to truth. The crux of the verse, he says, is to establish the conception that destroying the places of worship is evil only when not substituted by what is better than them.

- **The *ḥawāriyyūn* in the Quran.** They Christians adduce these verses to prove that the *ḥawāriyyūn* the apostles of Christ were mentioned in the Quran appreciatively, as they were the people who went round in the seven regions

of the world to preach the Gospel. They quote verses such as these: 1) “verily, we have sent our messengers with proofs and sent down with them the book and the criterion so that people would act justly.” (57:25) and 2) “mankind were one community and Allah sent prophets with glad tidings and warnings and with them He sent down the book (*al-kitāb*) in truth to judge between people in matter wherein they differed.”<sup>49</sup> They argue that the verses refer to the Disciples of Christ, who collectively preached one book, i.e., the Gospel. The verse talks about many messengers preaching one book. So, they definitely do not mean messengers such as Abraham, Moses, etc., since each one preached a different book. Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following points: first: the verses do not authenticate the disbelief in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who was sent to them and to other peoples who showed tenacious adherence to an abrogated religion. Second, their alleged claim that they will follow Christ and his apostles is a stark falsehood, as they are followers of neither, for two reasons: one, most of their religion is changed and therefore, not belonging to the Christ nor to his apostles. Two, the Christ prophesied the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as in the verse (61:6). Third: to say that the Quran revered their apostles is wrong interpretation of the Quran. After all, they have a long history of misinterpretation. They interpreted many verses in the same manner. The verse does not avail them the meaning they ascribe to it for the following reasons: A) the worthiest prophets of this description are those named in the holy Quran itself as in the verse (4:104). B) The mention of iron in this verse as being sent down as the revelation was sent is a clear indication of the role of *jihad* the Muslims would be carrying out. C) The book mentioned in the verse is not a specific book. Rather, it is a genre as in the verse (2:177). D) It talks about all the books revealed to the prophets.

Furthermore, the next verse talks about prophets such as Noah, Ibrahim, etc. This is a departure from the general to the specific, to draw attention to the qualities of some particular prophets. E) No verse in the Quran considers the apostles messengers. However, the verse (36: 14) wherein two messengers were sent to a town [some believe it is Antioch] but the dwellers of the town belied them. Then one more was sent to them. Again, they did not follow

them and upon that Allah caused them to perish through an awful cry. The Christians and some of the Muslim scholars believe that they were followers of the Christ. Nevertheless, the Christians believe they were two: one was Peter Simon and the other was Paul. And they also believe that they followed them. So, even in the Christian narrative they were not apostles of Christ. Furthermore, the people of Antioch were not inflicted with such collective death. Scholars of Islam are well aware of the fact that no such calamity after the revelation of the Torah took place.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the book was not sent with the apostles. It was sent with the Christ.

The verse (2:213) which reads “people were one community; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of glad tidings and as warners, and sent with them the Scripture so as to judge between people in the matters wherein they differed.” The people sent here is taken by the Christians to mean the apostles of Christ. Ibn Taymiyyah rejects the interpretation as invalid since the apostles were called messengers not prophets in their books. Besides, the book they preached was not sent with them nor did it contain judgment between people, unlike the Quran and the Torah, in which the verses on legal issues are abundant.

- **Scripture testified:** The Christians boast of the Quran’s confirmation of their scripture. Ibn Taymiyyah agrees with the fact that the Quran confirms the books before it. Nevertheless, he declares that the Christians missed to differentiate between what Allah has actually revealed to the prophets before the commission of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the doctrines they are adhering to. The Quran did not confirm the Trinity, the unity of the divine and the human, the indwelling, the divinity and the sonship of Christ, the legalization of illegal things such as the pork, impurities, etc., all these are abominable things oft-dispraised in the Quran. Moreover, if what they adhere to was valid, then the Prophet would not have fought them.

The Christians presumptuously tampered with the meaning of the Quran in their dialogue with the Muslims, to fit their false argumentations. Here are some of the verses they adduced to prove their aberrations:



1. They took as a plea the verse (42:15) wherewith the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded people to believe in whatsoever books Allah has sent down including the Quran, the Torah and the Gospels. To refute the meaning they ascribed to this verse, Ibn Taymiyyah studies it within context. The previous verses talk about the sending down of books to bind people in true belief but the People of the Book differed and had doubts therein. Therefore, the prophet warned against difference and doubts and commanded to believe in all the books revealed and to judge with justice. Besides, the verse orders the Prophet to declare that his and their lord is Allah and commands him to free himself from the deeds of the People of the Book if they do not follow him. So, the whole context testifies to the opposite of what the Christians have assigned to it. The Prophet as well as all people should believe in all the prophets indiscriminately. Moreover, the Quran is full of the commandments imposing on the Prophet to avoid the ways of the disbelievers—the pagans and the People of the Book—and to declare himself free from their beliefs. In short, they have no evidence in the verses they quote to support their allegations of the Quran legitimatizing their books.
2. Another verse is “argue not with the People of the Book except in a way that is better except the wrongdoers of them.”<sup>51</sup> The Christians interpret the verse as to mean that the Prophet is ordered to argue with the Christians in good manners, and the wrongdoers are the Jews. The phrase ‘the People of the Book’ in Quranic terminology always refers to both the Christians and the Jews. To discriminate between them and claim the superiority of either is plainly an instance of garbling divine texts.

#### **4.2.5 Christianity vs. Disbelief**

The Quran contains many verses that declare the blasphemy of the Christians. Here are some of them:

1. “They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then can do aught against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah son of Mary, and his mother and everyone on earth?<sup>52</sup>

2. They surely disbelieve who say : Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Who so ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evildoers there will be no helpers.<sup>53</sup>
3. They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying, a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.<sup>54</sup>
4. And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? he saith: Be glorified It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then Thou knewest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou art the Knower of Things Hidden. I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, (saying) : Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things.<sup>55</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah mentions many of such verses as proofs for the disbelief of the Christians along with any of those who reject the prophethood and message brought by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

As all his discussions prove the verses they bring to substantiate their claim that the Quran acknowledges and adopts their altered doctrines, can be turned against them. The meanings they ascribe to the different verses are far removed from the meaning intended and made clear through the context. Therefore, this invalid approach cannot lead to truth. The ideal way to arrive at correct conclusions is to study the verses in context. Holistic rather than fragmentary approach will surely lead to sound facts unless blurred by bias. Ibn Taymiyyah is obvious in stating the response of the Quran to the Christian faith and followers. The tone is never apologetic. Secondly, his discussions of the verses they plucked from the Quran to substantiate their position as followers of the religion that is recognized and adopted by the heavenly scriptures of theirs and of the adversaries, adds to the opinion he advocates and which the title suggests, viz, the alteration of religion.

#### *Chapter Four: Alteration in the Divine Message*

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One of the allegations they made in the letter and which Ibn Taymiyyah sees as one of the cardinal issues he is very passionate to discuss is the nature of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Using the biblical as well as the Quranic evidences, the Christians struggle to prove that the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is not binding upon them to follow. It is exclusively for the Arabs. As they had a better religion, according to their estimations, the Quran itself acknowledges it as sound and probably superior to the Quran, the Christians had better follow their religion. In response to this, Ibn Taymiyyah devotes much of his treatise to proving the universality of the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the obligation upon the Christians who had merely corrupted vestiges of an abrogated scripture. This is what will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah refers to the divisions of the Bible as the Torah (by which he means the Pentateuch) and the Gospels (by which he means the first four books).

<sup>2</sup> His order and will which are necessarily impersonal

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5:116-118.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 9: 30

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2: pp.260-261

<sup>6</sup> Although they have precedents in the apologies of the early Christians, a Trinitarian unity was never upheld by them. On the contrary, they believed in a tri-personal hierarchy as God.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 261

<sup>8</sup> The main charges levied against the Jew in the Quran are their disbelief in the signs of Allah, their aggression and transgression and their killing the prophets of Allah. See, for instance, *Al-Qur'ān*: 2: 61.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 9: 31.

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2. P. 262

<sup>11</sup> There is a big difference between what is beyond human mind to understand and what is impossible. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that whereas religions may contain some things that are incomprehensible, they do not entertain unreasonable ideas.

<sup>12</sup> See *Al-Qur'ān* 17: 1, 72: 19, etc.

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 46: 35.

<sup>14</sup> The Jews denied the Christ and the Christians denied Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them). See *Al-Qur'ān*: 4: 150-151 and 126.

<sup>15</sup> As in Mathew: 5:17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 3:56, 5:46 and 61:6

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 3: 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Leviticus*: 15: 19-33.

<sup>19</sup> *Leviticus*: 7:23: Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat.

<sup>20</sup> As in *Deuteronomy*: 14:7: Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you.

<sup>21</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 43

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*:5:47

<sup>23</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 7: 157

<sup>24</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 48

<sup>25</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 57: 27. The translation would naturally differ according to the understanding of the translator. Anyone interested in knowing the original verbiage should refer to the Quran.

<sup>26</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 3: 157-8

<sup>27</sup> In *Hebrews*: 1: 1, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." 'Diverse manners' could have been dreams, visions, and many other ways. This opened vistas for people who did not even see Christ to claim that they have received revelation such as Paul, whose epistles have been canonised. This also made possible for the Christians to assign much weight to what their fathers said, let alone what had been attributed to the apostles, who were unfairly granted the title messengers of God.

<sup>28</sup> Concomitance or *tawātur* in *hadīth* terminology means that a statement is narrated by a great number of people in a way that make it impossible for them to agree on error.

<sup>29</sup> That is why we find the phrase "the Gospel, according to John, Mathew, John, etc.

<sup>30</sup> The only difference is that the verbal traditions of the prophet Muhammad were preponderantly quoted *verbatim*. However, they are not attributed to God as being his words, but in the Quran it is stated that the prophet never speaks out of his own desires but is guided by Allah and based on this, (like other prophets), he is infallible.

<sup>31</sup> Therefore it is stated that the name 'Septuagint' (Greek, originally *Septuaginta*, meaning seventy and as a term refers to the Greek version of the Torah) came from this propaganda. But how they extended this to include the whole Bible is quite strange. It may be a false claim they made or it may be due to Ibn Taymiyyah's misquoting.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah had not known about the later division among the Christians themselves and the emergence of the Protestants who in turn divided into further sub-sects.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) and the New International Version of the Bible (NIV) are different. There are whole verses deleted from the NIV after being acknowledged as divine in the KJV. Although it is certain information that Ibn Taymiyyah did not know about these changes, it adds further proofs to the proofs of the changes he witnessed.

<sup>34</sup> It is traditionally believed that seventy men carried out the Greek rendering of the Old Testament.

<sup>35</sup> This inter-Christian polemical literature provided much data in respect of the weaknesses and inefficiencies of Christianity. This provided fertile land for the polemics of Ibn Taymiyyah who uses their own arguments against each other to counterattack them.

<sup>36</sup> In *Hebraic Roots Bible p. 3* (Copyright Word of Truth Publications, 2012) the author wrote "I have studied and perceived that some translations are third and fourth generations away from the original language. Each translation strays farther from the original text and becomes watered down and more distant from the truth." He also said in page 6: "There have been several areas where the translators of the Masoretic text purposely changed scripture to fit their own theology."

<sup>37</sup> Peter j. Gentry: "The Text of the Old Testament" Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 1 (March 2009). P. 24

<sup>38</sup> He says that it is a known fact that the judgement which they [the Jew] are commanded to follow is such that is not abrogated in the Gospels and the Quran. In a similar manner, what they ordered in the

Gospels to follow is such that is not abrogated in the Quran. The commandment in all these is to worship Allah, bid the thing he ordered and judge according to his judgement in any book as long as it is not abrogated in his later books.

<sup>39</sup> This is his belief concerning the content of the Bible, not the actual laws and worships they are practicing. In the latter, they innovated a lot, and invented many rituals and festivals alien to the original teachings. This will be discussed in the alteration of religion.

<sup>40</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2, p. 324

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 318

<sup>42</sup> This is to affirm to them that this rule applies to both but the Christians never acknowledge the Jew as being well guided people since they do not believe in the divinity of Jesus.

<sup>43</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 3: 199. See also 29: 47.

<sup>44</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 2: 62

<sup>45</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: 3: 124

<sup>46</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 9: 29. The succeeding verses clearly address the Christians who claimed Jesus to be Son Of God and the Jews who claimed Ezra to be Son Of God, in the literal sense of the word and states that by doing so they are like the disbelievers before them. In the very same verse he states the Christians took their bishops as gods apart from Allah whereas they were ordered to worship only one God with no partner.

<sup>47</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 15 and 19.

<sup>48</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol.3, p. 125

<sup>49</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 2: 213

<sup>50</sup> This is taken from the verse (28:43), which reads: “And We gave Moses the Scripture (the Torah) after We had destroyed generations of the old.”

<sup>51</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 29:46

<sup>52</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 17

<sup>53</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 72

<sup>54</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 73

<sup>55</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5: 116-7





# CHAPTER FIVE

*Christians*

*And*

*The Universality Of Islam*





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## **5 . CHRISTIANS AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF ISLAM**

In this chapter, Ibn Taymiyyah tries to affirm the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on the one hand and to prove the universality of his message on the other. He brings the proofs the Christians provide to testify the messengership of Christ and shows that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had better and clearer proofs for his prophethood and messengership. Apart from that, Ibn Taymiyyah disproves the Christians' allegations regarding the limited nature of the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

### **5.1 Unity of Religion**

The core family through which human race came into being is comprised of Adam and Eve. The purpose of creation is to worship Allah in the way He prescribes.<sup>1</sup> Adam was a prophet. His posterity retained monotheism for a long period. By the passage of time people started setting up the dead pious people among them as Gods whom they started praying, asking for help, succor, and intercession and even healing of diseases. This was the first time humanity indulged in polytheism. Allah, for the mercy and love of humanity sent to them a messenger. This messenger was Noah.<sup>2</sup> Like any messenger, his mission was to restore monotheism and eliminate corruption and injustice. In the same manner, all the other prophets and messengers were sent at times of deviation from monotheism to restore it. Thus, the message of all was the same. Since they all brought people back to the obedience of Allah, and since submission, peace, obedience and purity from polytheism are connotations of Islam; the prophets were all considered Muslims. In the Quran, Allah says, "religion with Allah is Islam."<sup>3</sup> He also says, "and he who seeks as a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted of him and surely he will be a loser in the hereafter."<sup>4</sup> Again, in the Quran many prophets are reported to have said they were Muslims or they are referred to as Muslims. Noah (as in 10:72), Lot (as in 51:36), Ibrahim (as in 3:67), Joseph (as in 12:101) and Solomon (as in 27:380) are, according to the Quran, Muslims.

This meaning of Islam made it more inclusive than to be a religion that is followed or founded by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is the way of

life followed by all the prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) since all propagated monotheism or pure worship of Allah.

Jesus is no exception. He is reported in the Quran to confess the same. He said as in this verse, “I [Jesus speaking] did not command them except that you [Allah] commanded me: that you [his people] should worship Allah, my and your lord, and I was a witness of them while I was among them.”<sup>5</sup> This unity of religion professed in the Quran does not necessarily lead us to claim that the law was also the same, or you have the choice not to follow Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) after his coming. The law that is actually concerned about the things allowed, mandated and prohibited is naturally different. Allah has made lawful for some people things that are prohibited for the others in other religions. In the same religion, things initially prohibited may be made permissible at later stages, and vice versa. But this abrogation is the exclusive right of Allah. Gradual development of legislation is a wise and divine procedure. Nevertheless, there are certain universal laws that never change. The prohibition of wine, pork, obnoxious things and abominations, severing ties with the relatives and parents, maltreatment, etc., and the obligation of good treatment, monotheism, positive attitudes towards all human kinds are some of such universals. Human nature is created to disdain certain things and to value certain other things. As these are there in all people, religions came to support and reinforce them.

Ibn Taymiyyah in his discussions of the monotheism for example, quotes Quranic verses such as:

“We did not send a messenger before you except that we reveal to him that there is no God except me, so worship me alone.”<sup>6</sup>

“And we have raised in every nation a messenger (proclaiming): worship Allah and avoid false Gods.”<sup>7</sup>In this regard, Ibrahim is considered as the leader. That is why Allah says in the Quran, “who forsakes the religion of Ibrahim except him who has befooled himself?”<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah says that the religion of all the prophets is one as the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “We, the congregation

of prophets, have one religion, and the closest to Jesus is I as there is no prophet between me and him.”<sup>9</sup>

Although Ibn Taymiyyah propounds that the message of all prophets is the same (i.e. monotheism), he asserts the precedence, domination and superiority of Islam (the version revealed to Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) over all other religions. What Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has received remains the only religion accepted by Allah as it encapsulated all the perfect features in the previous revelations. Hence, there is no place for pluralism (all religions are accepted) and relativism (there is no absolute truth). Ibn Taymiyyah also asserts throughout his writings that few of the so called followers of previous religions remained faithful to the teachings of their respective messengers.

The community of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is more merited than the other communities. In support of his persuasion, he adduces many verses of the Quran and *ahādīth*. The superiority claimed for the Quran led the Christians to investigate into the Quran for verses mentioning the merits of their religion. One of the verses they picked is this: “[and remember] when Allah said to Jesus, I am taking you back and raising you to me and cleaning you of the disbelievers, and making those who follow you above the disbelievers to the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>10</sup> The Christians take this to boast the Quran’s approbation and preference of them.

Ibn Taymiyyah acknowledges the fact that those who followed Christ are better than and above the disbelievers. However, this is especially for those who did not alter his religion. These are above the disbelievers. The Muslims did believe in him. Moreover, when the Christians changed their religion, and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent prophet with the religion of the prophets, He made the Muslims above the Christians to the Day of Resurrection. Allah says, “He has ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which we inspire in you [Muhammad], and that which we commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, (saying): establish the religion, and be not divided therein”<sup>11</sup> This verse orders that people should unite and follow the religion of the prophets. Division conduces to failure. The believers, in order to be victorious, have to be united. Victory

is always with the followers of prophets.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, among all circumstances there will remain a group of people holding fast to truth, despite the fact that the people let them down, as is prophesied by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).<sup>13</sup> This group is the true monotheists, and is thus the remnant of those who remained faithful to the principle of oneness of Allah.

Furthermore, the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians are unanimous that all the divine scriptures make it imperative to worship none but Allah and to believe that He sent to humanity messengers and made it compulsory upon them to establish justice and forbid injustice, abominable vices, polytheism and the like. They, moreover, agree on the Last Day. There are universals in all religions, which indicate clearly that they come from the same source.

The Christ and the prophets before him all came to establish monotheism, and the Torah is full of testimonies to this. None of them demanded that intercession should be sought from the dead people, prophets or kings, nor did anyone of them order people to pray him for their needs. None of them ever ordered his people to make images, or pray, or revere them. This unity makes us conclude that the religion of Moses is the very same religion as that of Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all), despite the fact that Christ came after Moses and abrogated some of the laws Moses brought, after confirming the law, and saying that he did not come to destroy the Law.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the religion of the Muslims is the religion of Ibrahim, Moses and the Christ. It is they, who truly followed the Christ, and that is why Allah has made them above the Christians until the Day of Judgment, and the Christians who altered the religion of Christ, who is clear from any affinity to them, just in the same manner as Moses is clear from those who altered his religion and discredited the Christ.

This unity of the religion of the prophets makes it an act of disbelief to belie or vilify any one of them. It is an article of faith in Islam to believe in all the prophets indiscriminately. Being as such, they should be revered and respected. They are placed at the highest degrees humans can ever reach. Based on this, the Jews have committed disbelief when they disbelieved the prophet Jesus and committed a heinous crime when they dubbed him bastard, and the Christians have committed disbelief

when they belied the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This unity, furthermore, entails that we must believe in all the books they brought which is again an article of faith in Islam. Disbelieving in any of such scriptures is tantamount to disbelief in Allah. The confirmation of the prophets of each other solidifies this unity. Ibn Taymiyyah said:

It is one religion, upon which prophets and messengers have agreed. They agree on the fundamentals of religion and the basics of constitution, despite their variety in law, manifested in the abrogating and abrogated regulations, which are similar to the variety in the same book. The Muslims were first commanded to pray towards Jerusalem, and then they were commanded to pray to the Holy Mosque at Makkah. Nevertheless, in both the cases they were following what Allah has revealed.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah based his argument on the following premises:

- The oneness of God: As God is one, He alone should be worshiped, throughout the ages. This stable commandment does not change with the change of time. Therefore, the various prophets and messengers should preach the same God. All preached monotheism, and warned against polytheism. The best community that remained faithful to this principle is the Muslims, and therefore are the closest to the prophetic guidance.
- The prophets' mutual confirmation: Each prophet confirmed his predecessors. Therefore, the disbelief in one is a disbelief in all others. To claim the obedience of one and the denial of another is rationally and religiously impossible.
- All prophets should be respected as the accredited teachers Allah has sent to humanity. Vilification of any is an act of disbelief with which the belief in others does not avail salvation.
- The books they brought from Allah confirm one another. The divine message is uniform.
- The variation in law is a logical development. Just as the same prophet may bring some directives and then abrogate them by the order of Allah, and just as the same book may contain ordinances which become later no longer in force, due to the revelation of other ordinances abrogating them, a prophet may rescind some or all the laws brought by his predecessors. This abrogation occurs to the items of

consumption and probably the festivals, and the like. News and Creeds are not susceptible to abrogation, because they are immutable facts.

Ibn Taymiyyah very prudently pinpoints the philosophy of prophethood. He states that as God is one, His message is one. The series of prophets is one whole unit and indivisible entity. The Christians should take them all or leave them all. Here Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that it is unjustifiable to disbelieve in any prophet, what to speak about abusing or condemning him. Once this principle is established, the Quran is inevitably part of the divine message, which is the last (and therefore valid) and therefore, is the most worthy of being followed. As the Christians have changed their book, they have no right to preach it and should follow the last and pristine message. Thus although Ibn Taymiyyah stressed upon the fact that Christ brought a true guidance from Allah, and although he was a great messenger of Allah, the Christians have no plea to preach his teachings as they have already altered and tampered with them. The conclusion he wants to reach is that the Christians have no option but to follow the divine guidance extant in the Quran.

## **5.2 Proofs of Muhammad's Prophethood**

Ibn Taymiyyah presents many proofs testifying that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came as a universal prophet from Allah with more cogent evidences than the earlier messengers brought. At the same time, he declared that one evidence is enough for affirming the prophethood of any prophet if this evidence is ineluctably tenable.<sup>16</sup>

### **5.2.1 The Biblical Evidences**

Ibn Taymiyyah quotes many biblical verses testifying to the veracity of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), either through prophesying his advent or through confirming what he has brought. This suggests that the people of the previous books have known him before his coming through what they have known in their scriptures. This notion recurs in the Quran in many places. Here an attempt will be made to quote some of the biblical verses Ibn Taymiyyah cites to prove his point:

- And he said The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.<sup>17</sup> Here Ibn Taymiyyah argues that Allah’s prophetic guidance is personified. The places mentioned are the habitations of different prophets. They denote Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) respectively. ‘Mount Paran’ refers, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, to Makkah, where the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) started his ministry, and the wilderness of Paran refers, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, to the wilderness between the Hejaz and the *Tūr* (Sinai Mount). However, the Easton Bible dictionary states that Paran was “a desert tract forming the north-eastern division of the peninsula of Sinai” and mount Paran was “probably the hilly region or upland wilderness on the north of the desert of Paran forming the southern boundary of the Promised Land.” However, Ibn Taymiyyah is correct because this place is spoken about in the Bible (*Genesis: 21: 21*) as being the place where Hagar and her son dwelled. Now this becomes a clear reference to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as a coming prophet.
- And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.<sup>18</sup> The translation as given by Ibn Taymiyyah is quite more revealing of the superiority of Ismail the prophet who was not prominent nor any one of his descendants until the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The most prominent descendant of Ismail is the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). But the different versions of the Bible depict Ismail differently in this text.
- And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? And whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.<sup>19</sup> The angel here addresses Hagar the mother of Ismail, the father of the Arabs. Ibn Taymiyyah



says that the promise is a prophecy that applies only to the Muslims, who soon became a great nation after the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

- And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, what aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.<sup>20</sup> This gives clear proof that Paran was the name given to Makkah, where the bondswoman, Hagar, lived with her son, Ismail.
- Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people therefore God hath blessed thee forever<sup>21</sup>. Ibn Taymiyyah propounds that the saints described here are the companions of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is they who always remember and praise Allah, in all their postures. Another

epithet that applies to them and not to the followers of Jesus is *jihad* with the sword especially that which has two edges.

- Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.<sup>22</sup> This is also an elaboration on the topic where the descriptions made fit only the followers of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).
- “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”<sup>23</sup>
- “Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.<sup>24</sup> The villages that Kedar inhabited, as Ibn Taymiyyah rightly espoused, were at Makkah. And the happiness mentioned is the happiness of the whole universe and in Arabia in particular.
- “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their

windows?<sup>25</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah viewed this as a meticulous description of Makkah. No city fits it as Makkah does.

- And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed: And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights: And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her Gods he hath broken unto the ground.<sup>26</sup>

This is a vision wherein the means of conveyance symbolize the people who use them. The Christ entered Jerusalem on an ass. The camel was used by the people of Arabia. Hence it is taken to represent Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who used the camel and who was impatiently awaited by the people of Madīnah. They used to climb the high places every day anticipating his arrival from Makkah.

- And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind.<sup>27</sup> The horses, the rest of the equipment of war and intense alacrity to fight are qualities applying to none, after David, except Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his people.
- Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.<sup>28</sup> The barren land and the singing refer to Makkah, which is described thus in the Quran. The singing is the Quran which Arabia never received any before it.
- For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.<sup>29</sup>

- For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.<sup>30</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah comments here by saying that Isaiah has described Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with the most particular epithets that is the sign on his shoulder, which is naturally the sign of prophethood which is not given to Jesus or Solomon. He also described him as the person who would sit on the throne of David, which Ibn Taymiyyah explains as indicating the taking of dominion from children of Israel.
- “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which [*sic*]thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?”<sup>31</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah says that the description given here is usually attributed to the *Ka'bah* because it is the *Ka'bah* not Jerusalem that is adorned and it is the *Ka'bah* which is served by the kings. It is Makkah, for which Allah has brought people from its inhabitants and from outside as pilgrims. Those who wanted to destroy or scare them have been expelled from it and it remained high in honor. None could destroy it even the Abyssinians who tried to destroy it with the elephant. It has been protected since

Ibrahim the prophet who built it. Jerusalem was destroyed many times and its people killed and deported.

- God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.<sup>32</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah claims that *holy one* who appeared in Paran, who had brightness and fear in the hearts of the enemies, was Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as Jesus did not appear in Paran.
- Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people.<sup>33</sup> The whole chapter three of this book is a prophecy that Ibn Taymiyyah says very clearly discuss the power of the Prophet and his people or nation and their dominance over the other powers. It applies to none else. What makes Ibn Taymiyyah certain of this is the mentioning of the name of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), which is no longer available in the Bible today. He mentions his name many times in the Bible, which suggests that many editions have been made to the Bible resulting in this change. He himself said he saw the name of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) mentioned in some of the extracts of the Bible he saw.
- The story of Nebuchadnezzar with the prophet Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar saw a dream and required it to be interpreted. Daniel interpreted it like this:  
Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And whosoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and

subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.<sup>34</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah says that this is the descriptions of Muhammad not the Christ (peace and blessings of Allah be upon both of them). It was he who was given a strong law and who demolished all the kingdoms and became the most dominant and his dominion shall remain forever. None can destroy it.<sup>35</sup>

- “The comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.”<sup>36</sup> Only the Quran claims to contain details about everything as in 16: 86. Moreover, the original word for the comforter (paraclete) has connotations that befit Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) more. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is called in the Quran mercy for all humanity. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the only Prophet who would intercede on behalf of the people on the Day of Resurrection. Ibn Taymiyyah says the *paraclete* (translated as comforter, intercessor or advocate in English) is given many meanings, some of which is *ḥammād*, *ḥāmid*<sup>37</sup> (one who praises very often) consoler, and he quotes that majority as upholding that it means *ḥamd* (the praise and thanks due to a great person). Although the etymology (explicated by the Christians) of the word does not support this meaning, the translations given to this word apply best to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is he who is very passionate for the welfare of his *ummah* (followers and enemies), and who would intercede on

the Day of Judgment on behalf of the sinners to be pardoned. He is the only intercessor on that day. Even in his lifetime he would always pray for the safety of his people (whoever comes after him to the Day of Judgment).

- “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”<sup>38</sup> These words are the Christ’s words. The only prophet who came after Jesus and confirmed him is Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).
- Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.<sup>39</sup> These give clear evidence that the Christ is speaking about someone who would come after him and would have a more comprehensive message than he would, something which the holy ghost does not fit for, according to Ibn Taymiyyah.

Ibn Taymiyyah also criticizes the soundness of the Christian’s approach for he affirms that they attributed to the word *paraclete* meanings inherent in Syriac and Greek which the Christ never spoke. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that Christ spoke Hebrew.<sup>40</sup> Most of the Christians say it means savior. None could say for sure who this is. Some say he is Christ. However, it cannot be the Christ for the following reasons:

The Holy Spirit is not identified only with the Christ as has been mentioned several times. Verses state that he is a different person, not Christ for he told them to keep his commandments and he will send them *another paraclete*. This has been described with high qualities such that he will remain with them forever whereas Christ did not

stay long with them. This shows that the latter abrogates the law of the predecessor. Ibn Taymiyyah said the latter testifies for him, and teaches them everything, and he rebukes them for sins. He tells them that it is expedient for them that he goes to let the other *paraclete* come. All these are applicable to someone that they can hear and see. It is then a great man who will be with them. He will be a man greater than Jesus will since he will tell them about things Jesus was not able to tell along with the other things mentioned. It is clear that the referent is other than Christ; these attributes are more applicable to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).<sup>41</sup>

- Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.<sup>42</sup>

The verse as given by Ibn Taymiyyah reads, “the prince of this world will come when I have nothing.” Ibn Taymiyyah takes it to indicate the dominion of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) over the past prophethoods.

- Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore, say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.<sup>43</sup>

Now the kingdom referred to is the prophethood. It was taken from the Israelites and given to the Arabs. Hence, the term “another nation”. It is they who brought the fruits of prophethood and overruled all those who opposed them.

- For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?<sup>44</sup>

### **5.2.2 The Quranic Evidences**

The Quran has been revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is replete with narrations about events of the ancient Past that none had any access to know before him. Ibn Taymiyyah says, “The Quran is full of news about



the unseen past which is not known to any human being, except through the prophets whom Allah has informed.”<sup>45</sup> This is an exclusive sign of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Ibn Taymiyyah asserts. Even stories that are there in other divine books are not as elucidated as they are in the Quran.

Moreover, the Quran talks about the life and destruction of many nations in the remote past: how their prophets tried to lead them to the right path but they disobeyed and what was the end of every one of such disobedient nations. The pagans or the People of the Book, who lived at the time of the Prophet, sometimes probed such news. They used to ask the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about things in the past, and revelation would come to his aid. He could not have known these, had he not received any revelation from Allah. Moreover, such news was sometimes initiated without any challenge on the part of the people. These became a witness for his prophethood and the prophethood of his predecessors. This is because his and their news were proved concomitant without previous collusion. Since they are in total agreement despite the long period, then they are all telling the truth. No one however, can claim that received it from any human being. People are unanimous in this regard for the following reasons:

- His enemies from his people were too anxious to find any such plea to reject and discredit his prophethood. Had they known or suspected any such thing, they would publicize it.
- His people were unanimous that no one taught him what he brought to his people.<sup>46</sup>
- At the time he was erected, people were either pagans or People of the Book. None was a believer in his religion. The code of life he prescribed was greatly different from the previous religions. It is also known that the stories Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) brought about ancient people had precedents in the previous books, so no one could discredit him; but at the same time, his way of narration is highly superior to the ways of the previous books.
- If he had taken part or all his knowledge from any one, he could not hide his source at least from people in the know. He would be discovered easily and the whole secret would be divulged.

- He was unlettered, and no one in his position is entitled to bringing anything similar (let alone superior) to what his predecessors had brought.

None of the above has happened. Rather, when his pagan people used to gather for consultation as regards what to say to people concerning Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), some suggested that he was a liar; others suggested to say to the people that he was a sorcerer; others suggested to say to people he was a poet. However, they themselves believed that these suggestions were all untenable arguments easy to reject. However, in their private seclusions, they affirmed the Quran being from any human source. They acknowledged the Quran captured their hearts when they listened to it. They would feel its sweetness and recognize it was not part of human production or composition. Moreover, the Prophet was known among them as the trustworthy. Therefore, the Quran narrated all the allegations levied by the people and vindicated the Prophet from all such accusations. The Quran also tells us that devils cannot bring down anything like the Quran. They were prevented from exploring the heavens as they used to do before the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The soothsayers made mistakes in their conjectures, unlike the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) or the Quran. Moreover, the poets used to listen to him but none ever found that the Quran is incomparably superior to the poetry they used to compose. Ibn Taymiyyah says that if the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) disclosed some of the things that Moses and the others told and which could not have otherwise been known except through them and if it was already known that he did not learn that from any, the conclusion is that he was none but a prophet from Allah.

Furthermore, people other than his contemporaries can know his trustworthiness and prophethood through the following ways:

- The exhaustively covered and concomitantly known biography of the Prophet, unlike any other human being
- He told about things nonexistent in the books of the previous prophets. Such being the case, it is impossible for him to learn from them things they did not know.

- If that were the case, his people would hurry to disclose it, as they did not leave any stone unturned to find any fault in him.
- An affair like this is not concealable. All (the enemies and followers, alike) would be curious to report it. Some of the scholars of the People of the Book came to the Prophet and asked him about things to come, like Abdullah bin Salām and some other Jews. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) satisfactorily answered all the questions and, therefore some converted to Islam. These tests would be invalid if they knew that someone told him about what they asked.
- Allah is a witness since the Quran is His word and none was able to bring anything like it. The Quran was revealed in a superb language and style, setting up a challenge commensurate with the mastery of the people of those times. Although they were masters of the language and used to compete in composing poetry and other literary genres, they were unable to meet the challenge the Quran posed before them every now and then. Hence, the challenge is still standing.
- His foretelling about the inability of humankind to produce any like it: Although the challenge was put forth in his time, none ever could meet it. A simple human being could not put forth such a challenge that endures so long. It is continuing despite the bitter hatred of many people in the world to change, malign or distort the Quran.
- The eternal veracity of the Quran: All the news contained therein is still true to the letter. Given the volume of the Quran, no one can ever speak about all such things mentioned in the Quran, and yet remain immune from mistake in at least some minute details.

Unlike all other prophets, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was given an eternal miracle, the Quran. This is because humanity cannot distort or produce any like it. Every prophet is given miraculous capabilities, (such as healing the ill, making inanimate things animate, etc.) that his people well mastered. As the Arabs were masters in literature, the Prophet was given, among other miracles, the Quran, which is an inimitable literary work. The Prophet said, “Never was there any prophet of the prophets except that he was given of the signs, due to the like of which humanity believed. But the thing I was given is a revelation that Allah revealed

to me; therefore, I wish to have the greatest number of followers.”<sup>47</sup> The prophets were all raised to save people from the wrath of Allah, by leading them to the path that He favors, namely to worship none but Him and to act according to His commandments. He set them as perfect human examples to demonstrate the conduct most favorable to Allah. The prophets conveyed that accurately, warned people from following the path of the ingrate and narrated to people the miserable end of those who rejected the divine message and followed their desires in the previous nations.

Such prophets performed wonders and brought books with them so that people can recognize them. Some of them were sent with books revealed to them while others were erected or sent to revive a previous religion.

The miserable end of those who belied the prophets is another sign for the veracity of the prophets and the authenticity of their message. All the above is stated in the Quran. Allah sent many prophets and messengers to peoples. Noah, Ibrahim, Christ, Sāliḥ, Hūd, Lot and the like were sent to their respective peoples. Those who disbelieved them were destroyed. This is another sign Ibn Taymiyyah mentions. Later people were recommended to take lessons from the end of those peoples and avoid their way. Therefore, the Quran exhorts people to move about and ponder over the events, incidents and realities manifest in the world.

The signs for the veracity of the prophets are various and not confined to a particular period. They are witnessed before, during and after their ministries. One of the incidents that herald the coming of a prophet is the prophecies of his predecessors, and the incidents indicating the coming of that prophet. His triumph over his enemies and their destruction are signs during his ministry. After his death the followers' victory and the defeat of their enemies are signs for the veracity of his prophethood. In countless times in the Quran it is mentioned that Allah makes triumphant the followers of the prophets.<sup>48</sup> The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is no exception. As far in history as the time of Ibrahim, the Prophet Muhammad was prophesied. Ibrahim (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) prayed Allah to erect for the people of Makkah (where he entrusted his wife Hagar and Ismail) a messenger from among themselves.<sup>49</sup> Further, many such signs were observed by people during his childhood and upbringing, such as what happened to

his wet nurse<sup>50</sup> and what has been seen during his childhood.<sup>51</sup> After his death, his followers were accorded great respect and awe. They used to be victorious even when they are a half or third the number of the enemies. Moreover, although sometimes they were defeated, as it is the way of Allah to have his friends defeated sometimes as a test, the ultimate victory was always theirs.

It should be noted, Ibn Taymiyyah affirms, that once a prophet shows one sign that is sufficient to prove the veracity of his message, he has established a perfect proof, on the bases of which people become immediately countable for their rejection. Just as in the case of matters of litigation where the proof once established against either of the litigating parties, the other has no right to ask for another; it is not compulsory for the prophet to provide more and more signs. The contumacious disbelievers always ask for more evidences even when the proofs are enough for any sane person to ascertain the veracity of something. Therefore, those who adamantly rejected divine guidance due to the number of evidences are, nevertheless, bound by the commandment of the Prophet. However, Allah must have some wisdom for the multiplicity of the signs of prophethood. The more the proofs, the more apparent truth becomes. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was provided with a greater number of proofs due to the universality of his message. The adamant disbelievers may require to be shown more signs or particular signs. Sometimes they are given, sometimes they are not. With the succession of the signs, more and more people come round and get convinced, and they become more and more aware of the inability of those who defied the truth. These signs, especially those involving punishment or destruction of those asking them, are sometimes withheld out of mercy for people.<sup>52</sup>

### **5.2.3 The Miracles**

Ibn Taymiyyah affirms that the miracles of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are far more in number and more cogent than the miracles of all the other prophets and messengers. These miracles can be broadly classified into two categories:

- What has passed and has become circulating news like the miracles of Moses and Jesus.

- What is still a standing miracle such as the Quran. Other examples include the knowledge and faith in his followers, the Sharia, his description in the previous books, the miracles of his followers, the news prophesied in the Quran that came true, such as the conflagration in Hejaz, the Turks' fighting the Muslims and the victory of the Romans over the Persians.

The Quran invited the disbelievers of his times and of all times to bring ten chapters like the Quran then it challenged them to bring a chapter like it, (although a chapter may be two lines). And here in the next verse Allah says, "if you do not do[bring a chapter like it], and you will never do, then fear, the fire the fuel of which is people and stone, prepared for the disbelievers."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the Quran goes in challenging the disbelievers as far as to declare that if the human race as well as the jinn jointly tries to produce any like it they will not be able to do so.<sup>54</sup> Since its revelation to the Prophet who lived among the masters of the language, who were well motivated to rebut and refute it , until the present time, none ever was able to meet the challenge. Rather, the challenge is still standing and it will continue until the Day of Judgment.

This renders the Quran an eternal miracle unparalleled in previous prophethoods. This miraculousness of the Quran does not consist in the fact that people were prevented from trying to bring anything like it. Although this is a miracle, if it is true, the Quran is intrinsically inimitable. The diction, the euphony, the Style, the utterance-meaning compatibility, the expositions it makes about Allah's names, attributes, angels, etc., the prophesying of the unseen future events and the like, contribute to this miraculous nature of the Quran, and make it different from all the other literary genres the Arabs had known and make it distinct from the previous books or the books authored in any topic, be it theological philosophical, scientific, or whatever. Moreover, it is unmatched in structure, manner, reality, and all considerations.

Ibn Taymiyyah posited that the evidences of prophethood are like the evidences of lordship in that some of them are apparent to all while others are manifest only to knowledgeable people. Moreover, as the humans need air more urgently than they need water, and need water more than they need food, Allah has made air a common asset effortlessly available, and made water more available than food. In the same

manner, Allah has made evidences of lordship more common and available to all people, because people direly need them. Every human being needs to know his creator, sustainer, etc., to worship the right and the only God worthy of worship. In the second degree come the evidences of prophethood, which in turn are more easily observable to all than the particular details of law.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) foretold many incidents and all successively materialized. Some of these are:

- The splitting of the moon: The disbelievers asked him to show them a sign. He showed them the splitting of the moon, which is a proof for the changes of the universe at the end of time. It is stated in the Quran that the heavens, the earth and the planets will undergo tremendous commotion and disorder.<sup>55</sup> This incident (the splitting of the moon) was seen by all, the believers and the disbelievers. The disbelievers thought that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had deceived them through magic. They asked the travellers who were not there, and all confirmed it. Therefore, it was recorded in the Quran. The Prophet used to pray with these verses in the congregational and public prayers. None ever rejected that as untrue. Had it been untrue the disbelievers who were very keen to discredit him would have scandalized him for that.
- The night migration to Jerusalem and his ascension to heavens: There he saw the paradise, Hell, the angels, the prophets, the heavens and so on. Naturally, his people did not believe him. They asked him to describe the holy mosque at Jerusalem. He did to the very truth they knew. He moreover, told them that on his way he saw one of the traders from Quraish (his people) lost his mount in a place at Shām. While he was searching it, the Prophet passed and told him about his mount. The Quraishi pagans asked the man after his return and he acknowledged it.
- The Prophet used to pray Allah for rain, victory, etc. His prayers used to be answered immediately. This happened several times.
- His communication with the animals: He did many miraculous things with animals, such as speaking, consoling, ordering as well as the surrender of the wild animals to him, the complaints of animals to him against their masters, and many others. All these took place in the presence of many people.

- In the same manner, he spoke to trees and they obeyed him and prostrated for him. He also healed the ill, by the leave of Allah.
- An eye of one of the companions of the Prophet was injured and dropped over his cheeks. The Prophet called him and wiped it with his palm. Immediately it became the best of his eyes. Another companion of his had his leg broken in one of the expeditions. The Prophet wiped it and it returned to its previous state.
- The stump of wood he used to stand on and deliver his speeches to people cried when the Prophet used the pulpit in its stead. The Prophet to console the stump, stepped down from the pulpit and embraced the stump, which instantly stopped crying.
- A Bedouin asked him to show a sign. He told the Prophet to call a bunch of fruit. The Prophet called it, and the bunch of fruit came jumping.
- The multiplication of fruits and food: In several occasions, he prayed Allah and to the surprise of many, the small amount of food or fruits sufficed a great number of people.

The wolf recommended a Bedouin to go and listen to the Prophet, telling people of events of the past. The Bedouin led his flock to Madīnah, the city of the Prophet and once he arrived, the Prophet asked him initially to tell the people about what he saw. These phenomenal miracles undoubtedly testify to his prophethood.

#### **5.2.4 Personality of the Prophet**

The conduct, morality, sayings and actions he did and said, and the law he brought are signs of his being a prophet. The noble lineage he belongs to is another indispensable sign. All the prophets were born into noble families, who were part of noble clans and of equally honorable descents and races. This was the testimony of the Caesar of the Christian Byzantium during the time of the Prophet. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) belongs to the noblest and purest pedigree. He was selected from the descent of Ibrahim from whose posterity was selected all the erected prophets. Ibrahim begot two sons who were the ancestors of all prophets. From the branch of Ismael, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the only prophet and messenger, counterbalancing all those who descended from the branch of the prophet Ishāq (Isaac). Along down the lineage, Quraish was the best



tribe to which the best clan of Hāshim belonged. He was raised in Makkah, (the mother township) in which the Holy Mosque was built by Ibrahim and Ismael, and which is the pilgrim sight of all prophets and which will continue to be visited in the same name.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

Both in his raising and upbringing, he reached the acme of perfection a human can reach. He has been known for his probity, righteousness, justice, morality, eschewing and circumventing obscenity, injustice and all abominations. All those who knew and believed in him before his prophethood acknowledged this in him. Those who disbelieved in him after his being selected prophet knew no deficiency in him neither in his words nor deeds, nor in his manners nor did they ever witness him telling lies, committing injustice or vile acts. Moreover, his physical constitution and countenance manifested one of the pictures, most inclusive of good features. He was unlettered from an unlettered community; neither they nor he knew anything the People of the Book had known, nor did he ever learn any of the people's sciences nor had he any associations with such people. He did not claim prophethood until he reached the age of forty, whereat he experienced something amazing and received great words, the like of which was never heard earlier or later, bringing something none in his community had ever known. His followers were typically the followers of the prophets, viz, the vulnerable people, whereas the people of authority belied and opposed him, and sought his destruction and that of his followers with all their might and means, just in the same manner the disbelievers used to do with the prophets and their followers who did not follow them without fear or favor. He had nothing to give them neither wealth nor office; he did not have a sword (military force). Rather, both were with his enemies. These persecuted his followers by all means while patiently enduring, totally unwilling to concede their religion due to the sweetness of faith and knowledge that saturated their hearts.<sup>56</sup>

He used to come to people during their visiting the Holy Mosque at Makkah to invite them to the religion Allah has commanded him to convey to his people. Many people turned away from him and many reviled at him. Yet he persistently continued his propagation, which was welcomed by the people of Madīnah, who received some knowledge of the coming prophet through the Jews, their neighbors. Then his message increasingly enjoyed wide currency. Thus, all knowledge they had regarding the true faith was from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They never adopted anything that does not have his sanction. Therefore, innovation in religion was easily discernable. Knowledge and faith guarded against innovation in religion.

His followers, who previously had been the epitome of idol-worship, bloodshed, divination, severing kinship ties, denial of resurrection, etc., became the most knowledgeable pious and fair people on earth. When the Christians in Great Syria saw them, they thought them to be no less in these terms than the apostles of Christ. The legacy they left is a clear testimony to that.

The Prophet despite the immense expansion of his dominion, died poor, and left neither money, nor wealth except the personal arms he had and his mount, with some of his clothes in pawn.<sup>57</sup>

### **5.2.5 Merits of His Community**

Ibn Taymiyyah considers the merits of the Prophet 's followers as a credit added to the veracity of his prophethood. Ibn Taymiyyah classifies nations into two types: those given a divine book like the Jews and Christians and those who were not given any book such as the Indians, the Turks, the Greek and the Arabs before Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Generally speaking however, all peoples and nations acknowledge the hereafter and that the good is better than the bad and that justice is better than injustice. Nevertheless, the people with a divine book are better in ethics and management of things than those who were not given a book.

In terms of monotheism, worships and transactions, the Muslims are middle and moderate, better than the People of the Book. Islam encapsulates all the good features inherent in the Torah and the gospels, revealed to Moses and Jesus. The Muslims excelled in both the secular as well as the religious sciences. There may be some Muslims less faithful and careless about religious sciences but they still excelled in secular sciences. This class of people are least valued by the Muslims. These discarded people may be better than the scientists of the People of the Book may. Thus, even the scum of this nation may be better than the previous nations. Moreover, in theological matters, what the prophets spoke about the community of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is no doubt the most reliable reference. In terms of *jihad* the Muslims are the best of those who carry out *jihad*. The Jews did not perform *jihad* with Moses. They backed away at the most critical juncture when the prophet Moses extended his most imploring appeal to urge them to carry out the divine commandment of fight the infidels. Similarly, The Christians did

not fight by the order of religion. Through all these discussions, Ibn Taymiyyah would like to prove to the reader that the Muslims are better and middle between the Jews and the Christians. He recapitulates his previous discussions by saying:

Let the sane man ponder over the minds of the Muslims, their manners and their justice. It will make clear to him the difference between them and the others. Then, ponder over the manner of their worships, their perfection and moderation...the purification manners, the alignment in prayer, the bowing and prostration, their facing the *Ka'bah*, the house of Ibrahim the leader of all creations, their abstention from speaking [during prayer], their humility and serenity, recitation of the Quran and listening to it, through which every fair man can distinguish between the Quran and the rest of the books, and the like of the differences, which demonstrate the superiority of the worships of the Muslims over the others. Moreover, the Muslims' judgment concerning the capital punishments and rights is inevitably observable for every sane man, to the extent that some of the Christians used to appoint one in their lands to judge between them, according to the Sharia of the Muslims.... The Muslims are middle and moderate between the Jews and the Christians in monotheism, prophethoods and lawful and unlawful items, and the like. All this proves the superiority of this nation over the two nations. Although the evidences are too innumerable, the intention here is to point out that briefly. The conclusion is that the superiority of the nation conclusively indicates the superiority of its leader.<sup>58</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah here sets a stick yard to examine the veracity of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in his claim of prophethood. He says that anyone claiming what Muhammad, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) claimed, must be any one of three: a) a true Prophet or messenger like Noah, Ibrahim, etc., who are mentioned in the Quran; b) a just king who formulated a just law, with which he manages people's affairs justly, and forces people to act in a like manner, like those who formulated the laws in India, Persia and the like; or he may be: c) a liar, deliberately perpetrating sins including lying and oppression and blunders through speaking without knowledge. As far as the intention is concerned, this triple classification can be reduced to two: whether his intention is to lead people to justice or injustice. The latter is an evil man, and this kind of men must lie either intentionally or unintentionally whereas the former is a righteous one. In the latter case, the man concerned either knows what he tells of the unseen things, confident in his information, and certain in its veracity, or he is not certain of the veracity of what he prophesies and tells. The man telling about things with unquestionable veracity should be obeyed and his teachings should not be violated, because he is surely a prophet. Anyone who likes justice may devise a law that he thinks is just; and when he gives news, he would be speaking the truth to the best of his knowledge. This is

common in all people with good faith and good will. However, when he never makes any mistake, this cannot be other than a prophet, immune from mistake. Infallibility is human quality exclusively for prophets and messengers. The rest of people however good they may be will commit mistakes in their commandments or news. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) never told any untrue information nor did he ever order anything that is against justice or wisdom. Therefore, all that he said is true, including his statement that he was a prophet, higher in status than the rest of the prophets, that he was the seal of the prophets sent to the entire world, that the book he brought was truly revealed to him by Allah, and that this book is dominant over the rest of the books. The multitude and the systematicity of the laws, regulations, worships and all other ordinances prove that they are coming from Allah. No human being can ever make any such great, mistake-free and contradiction-free system, unless he is receiving it from the Omniscient God. Anyone unable to make such distinctions with which to know the true prophet from the imposter has degenerated to the lowest degrees of ignorance.

In addition, the question, why did people in different lands and with various cultures believe he was a prophet from Allah? He did not pay them nor did he promise them anything. He was not a force to be feared to compel people to convert to Islam. He himself and his followers were badly persecuted and tortured in his initial stages of ministry. What made his people to endure all such anguish-laden situations and unbearable tortures? Besides, the manners of his companions proved that they were not the product of an imposter, or simple leader. They were the epitome of sacrifice, courage, generosity, magnanimity and abstention from following worldly lusts.

### **5.2.6 The Precursory Events**

Other signs include the elephant the Abyssinians brought to destroy the *Ka'bah* and the guarding of the heavens from the devils lest they should overhear the news from the heavens. Upset by the defiling of the Christians' church in Sana'a (Yemen), the Abyssinian king, tried to revenge by destroying the *Ka'bah* of the Arabs in Makkah. He brought an invincible force of hosts and armaments lead by a gigantic elephant. He poked the elephant to demolish the *Ka'bah* but the elephant refused to make that presumptuous step. However, when they faced him to the opposite direction that is

towards the south, he would run. At last, after many disparate attempts Allah sent birds to strike them with stones, sparing no one. This phenomenal incident was considered a harbinger for the coming of a Prophet as that was in the same year he was born. This event installed in the hearts the significance and the sanctity of the *Ka'bah*, as the house of Allah which he protected, and devastated its enemies. Such protection was naturally not for the sake of the neighbors of the *Ka'bah* as they were polytheists, nor were these polytheists dearer to Allah than the Christians who had a divine book. Rather, it was surely for the sake of the sacred house or for the sake of the Prophet who was to be born that year, or for both.

Moreover, the Quran started descending at early time when Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his followers were persecuted in Makkah by the disbelievers. At that time, angels preventing the devils from overhearing what is said there guarded the heavens.<sup>59</sup>

This debarment provoked the devils and the jinn in general, to make a thorough survey to discover the reason thereto. After wide dispersion in the land and sea, they found the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) performing 'the dawn prayer' with his companions. They listened to the recitation of the Quran. They understood clearly that it could not be the speech of ordinary men. They came back to their people advising them to follow the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and declaring their belief in him. This occasioned the revelation of a Quranic chapter narrating the whole incident. The time this was revealed to and recited by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the majority of people were disbelievers. They all heard it along with the followers but none ever discredited this as untrue. This is because, Ibn Taymiyyah justifies, all people observed the falling of the celestial bodies and as a result got terrified. They thought that the dwellers of the heavens were killed. Therefore, they rushed to offer offerings for their Gods. It was something that they never saw before<sup>60</sup>. When this was revealed to the Prophet, none belied him.

### **5.3 Universality of the Message**

The universality of the message of Islam is one of the major points Ibn Taymiyyah has undertaken to discuss in the beginning of the book. The letter to which Ibn

Taymiyyah puts his response attempted to argue in favor of the universality of Christianity, and that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent only to the Arabs. In order to do so, they quote many of the sayings of the prophets as well as the Quran and assign to them meanings that are in line with their allegations. Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to prove the universality of the message of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) , and at the same time refute the claims of the Christians.

### **5.3.1 Methods of the Christians More Applicable To the Prophet Muhammad**

Ibn Taymiyyah declares that the Christians have no right in quoting any of the prophets or messengers to support their religious doctrines. This is because they knew those whom they quoted such as Moses, Jesus, and the rest, in one of the following ways:

- Through the proofs such prophets adduced like the miracles;
- They just believed in their prophethood without any evidence;
- They quoted them because the Muslims acknowledge them as prophets.

However, all the three reasons seem invalid, since in the first case, any proof available for the prophets before Muhammad are greater in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The miracles and signs given to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are greater in number and more convincing than those of the previous prophets are. Moreover, every proof for the veracity of the prophethood of Moses and Christ proves the veracity of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). To apply the criterion to one of the prophets and not to the other is tantamount to divesting the proof from its meaning. If the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) satisfies the conditions they have set for prophethood, which are demonstrable in the other prophets, then he is a prophet. To claim that the conditions, though available in all are proofs for all but Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is rationally unpalatable. More importantly, if they believed in the prophethood of the previous prophets without any proof, which is a fact, then they have based their religion on delusory bases.

If however, they quoted them because the Muslims believe in them, this is wrong for the following reasons:

- When you stand before Allah what is the plea you will produce for believing one and disbelieving the other, while the veracity of him whom you disbelieve is more prominent than that of the others. If the evidences you quote are correct, then they prove the veracity of the one you have rejected too. If they are incorrect then your religion is not valid, since you depend on incorrect evidences.
- The Muslims knew the prophets only through Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). If he were not true, the Muslims would not have known the other prophets. Here your evidence becomes invalid. If, however, he is true then here too your argument becomes invalid.
- The Muslims does not believe in the prophethood of any prophet except accompanied with the belief in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). None believed in the prophets and excluded Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). All the evidences testifying the veracity of any of the prophets testifies a fortiori to the genuineness of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).
- The Muslims believe in Moses and Jesus, who prophesied his coming. If they prophesied his coming, this is a clear proof of his prophethood. If they did not prophesy his coming, the Muslims believe only in those who prophesied his coming.

Thus, Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrates their tenable position in quoting the prophets. He, in his entire thesis endeavors to prove that they did not base their religion on what the prophets said and commanded. They erected their theological edifice on fragile bases.

### **5.3.2 The Quran in Arabic**

The Christians believe that since the Quran was revealed in Arabic, it addresses none but the Arabs. It is not a universal message as the Muslims claim. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the following answers to them:

- If the language matters, this applies to the Torah and the Gospels (the original books given to Moses and Jesus respectively, not the ones available now), as they were imparted to Moses and Jesus in Hebrew. This also applies to all the divine scriptures. In fact, they all were sent down in one language, the language of the community of the respective prophet/messenger. Then the message reaches the other nations/communities, either through translation or through learning the original tongue.
- The Christ and his apostles spoke Hebrew. Then he sent his apostles to the other communities to convey his message to them in their respective languages. If they think that the apostles spoke in the tongues of peoples, this is also reported about the companions of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) whom he sent to the neighboring kingdoms and communities.
- Among the Christians at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were some who spoke Arabic, and therefore they could understand the Quran, albeit their diversity of origin. The people who sent the letter to the Muslims could understand a lot from the Quran and they quoted it in their arguments. How is it reasonable to say that they are not bound by the Quran?
- Understanding every verse in the Quran is not obligatory. What is obligatory is to understand the core message that is understandable in all languages. The verses that state that the Quran was revealed in Arabic so as to be understood do not prove their (the Christians') claim. Rather, the Quran was revealed in Arabic because it is the best vehicle and the most capable of conveying the meaning of the Quran. This is to be understood in the best way and then transmitted correctly to the other communities. The grace is more for the Arabs for getting first-hand information and then being the mediators to the other communities.

### **5.3.3 The Alleged Infallibility of the Apostles of Christ**

If the Christians claim that their books were translated to the other communities by the apostles, who were infallible messengers, unlike the Quran, which is translated by fallible translators, this can be refuted through the following:



- This is a stark fabrication. Countless Arabs were followers of Christ. They did not change his messages before the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Yet, there was no book, neither the Torah nor the gospels, written in Arabic, although they were the neighbors of Jerusalem.
- Translating a book need not be carried out by one who is infallible. Anyone knowing the two tongues is eligible for the task. If many translated but not differed despite their dispersion in various countries, this bears witness that they translated it correctly.
- The claim that the apostles were infallible messengers as Ibrahim, Noah, etc., is a false claim. Rather, they are the messengers of Christ. Moreover, many of the Christians believe that the apostles were messengers of Allah but not prophets. However, none can be a messenger but not a prophet, nor can such a man be infallible. If they had wonders, they are like the upright Muslims who show wonders but are still fallible.

#### **5.4 Islam: the Uncalled-For**

The Christians claimed that ‘since we had our own prophets who spoke to us in our tongue and preached to us the religion we are following now, there is no need to follow this man.’ Ibn Taymiyyah answers them in the following manner:

- The erection of one prophet does not necessitate that none else will be erected. Moses, for example, was sent to the children of Israel with the Law. Then the Christ was sent to them and it was imperative on them to believe in him. Those who did not believe in him were disbelievers.
- The claim that they are still adhering to the religion preached by the apostles is untrue. Rather, what they now adhere to is concocted and innovated. The creed, the prayer to the east, making of images in the churches, and considering the people portrayed as intercessors, and setting up their days as festivals, building churches in their names, legalizing pork, not circumcising, monastery life, deferring the fast to the spring, extending it to fifty days, the sacraments, etc., all these are their making. The Christ did not sanction them.
- To claim that the apostles handed down the scriptures to all peoples, each in their tongue is not completely true. The Arabs did not receive the Torah and

Gospels in Arabic. They were translated into Arabic only later. If the Arabs before Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are bound by a book revealed in a tongue not theirs, why are the Romans not bound by the book that was revealed in another tongue but translated into theirs later?

### **5.5 Criteria for Authentic Prophethood<sup>61</sup>**

There is a great difference between true and false claimants of prophethood. True prophets are at the highest degree whereas false claimants or impostors are the most wretched humans. The difference is therefore as big as the difference between black and white or good and evil. Heavenly scriptures warned too much against lying against Allah. See for example, the verses in the Quran: 6:93, 39:32-34, 39:60, etc. The Bible also contains verses to this effect. If lying to people is strictly prohibited in all scriptures, what to speak of lying to Allah? Is there a sin graver than that? Therefore, it is pertinent to set a system through which one can identify each.

There are several ways to know the genuineness of a statement. Ibn Taymiyyah identifies the following:

1. General Concomitant narration: The Quran was concomitantly transmitted. That is, a great number of people without previous orchestrations to fabricate narrated the same verses *verbatim*. They did not know about one another, and yet their accounts were in meticulous concord. This type of narration is the most reliable in the sight of the *ḥadīth* experts. *Aḥādīth* (pl. of *ḥadīth*) narrated in this manner were at the highest degree of authenticity. Now the *aḥādīth* that contained miracles of the Prophet were more concomitantly narrated than the *aḥādīth* detailing manner and number of prayers. This is because as Ibn Taymiyyah propounds, they all took place in public. Some of them were witnessed by hundreds of people. For example, all those who were with him, who were one thousand and five hundred, saw the gushing of water from between his fingers at Hudaibiyya. Similarly, many saw the splitting of the moon and testified to it although they were geographically too far apart. Many of these miracles took place in battles and the congregations of people. Hosts of people and whole armies used to satisfy their hunger or quench their thirst with scanty supplies, multiplied miraculously at the hands of the prophet. This

great number of people witnessing the same incident makes it impossible for them to agree on the same testimony unless this is an unquestionable fact actually seen by all.

2. Limited concomitance, which becomes widely known within a specific class of scholars, professionals, or a group of people belonging to the same sect, religion, and so on. Through this type of narration many miracles are commonly known to scholars, historians, specialists, etc.

Ibn Taymiyyah espouses that the evidences and signs of prophethood are concomitantly known among the Muslims, the commoners and the elite, those with mean knowledge and the knowledgeable scholars.

3. Virtual concomitance: here he refers to the news that becomes known to all classes although every individual narration may not suffice alone in proving or confirming the news heard. He gives examples such as people's knowledge of the proverbial courage of 'Antarah and Khālid bin Al-Walīd, that Al-Mutanabbī was a poet, etc. these are known to all peoples through the recurrent narration. This kind of accounts collectively entails unquestionable truths, although individual narrations will not lead to this level of certainty. Moreover, if the news transmitted in this manner about people of this kind and by people of this category is considered true, the news transmitted about the proofs of prophethood are more authentic both in quality and quantity, since they are narrated by more trustworthy people such as the scholars of Islam. Besides, and the number of narrations are more than the number of the narrations transmitted about the people spoken about above.

4. Some of the signs were performed in the presence of thousands of people. These include for example, augmentation of food during the digging of the trench around Madīnah to protect it from the pagan confederates' attack. Other examples are the gushing of water from his fingers and the overflowing of the well at Ḥudaybiyyah. The people witnessing this incident were one thousand and five hundred. They were all pious people all aware of the gravity of the sin of putting words in the mouth of the Prophet. None ever doubted the narration of these signs. They all narrated it in the same manner and there was no difference among

them in relation to the details, although they did not make any previous agreement to confirm one another.

5. Every class of specialists (theologians, exegetes, jurists, etc.) has narrated in their respective books a number of signs enough to lead to certain and firm belief in them. Books of different categories are overflowing with signs of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Each author mentions them for a different purpose and to prove a different point.
6. Whole books were devoted to this genre of knowledge. The content of these books is only the signs of prophethood. As a result, a good collection of books was produced solely for this purpose.

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyyah, (apart from setting criteria for authentic prophethood), provides ways of testing the truthfulness of the claimant of prophethood. He viewed that the procedure applied for the confirmation of veracity of prophethood is very much the same news is confirmed. To say, "I am a prophet," is a piece of news. The transmission of his signs is also through news telling. If the news is identical with reality then it is true. If they are not identical, it is lying whether the informant intends to report contrary to truth, or not. However, in the former case he is punishable whereas in the latter case he is not punishable once he exerts to know the truth and makes all possible investigation. On the bases of this, *ahādīth* are rejected either because the narrator deliberated lying or because he unintentionally misreported. The companions of the Prophet were never known for deliberate lying. Even ordinary people well known for lying sometimes tell the truth. In this case, confirmation is obligatory, as ordered in the Quran. The claimant, the denier, the witness and the confessor are all news tellers, whose news are subject to verification. Based on the above, Allah commanded that one should not speak what one knows to be untrue or speak about or negate something one does not know. Clear proofs should be believed and not opposed with false claims. Such proofs should be asked for, whether the informant is pious or even a disbeliever. His news should not be accepted or rejected until verification is carried out. Therefore, the Prophet said about the People of the Book, "Do not believe or disbelieve them" since they may mistranslate the information in their books. This is the rule Islam adopts in the treatment of news.

Therefore, the *ḥadīth* specialists drew very clear measures in the acceptance or rejection of narrations, based on the retention and of the narrators. They authored a great number of books for defining their rules and classifying narrators according to their reliability in reporting the prophetic *aḥādīth*. Some narrators were known for their sound memorization and truthfulness in narration. The *aḥādīth* reported by these are accepted. Others were true but with faults in their memorization. These are described as such and their *aḥādīth* are suspended. This is also the case of those who occasionally lied. Moreover, if later proofs became available for the deliberation of lying then the *aḥādīth* of these people are rejected all together. Thus, only the *aḥādīth* verified to be authentically narrated are enacted and put in force. Other *aḥādīth* are either rejected or suspended. Negation and affirmation should be based on sure knowledge.

Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that these measures are the only measures capable of defining sound and unsound narrations. If acceptance and rejection of news is based on other than these, no truth will be reached, and people would seek and follow their desires.

However, for the things that take place or occur only in association, the absence of one associate entails the absence of the other. Therefore, if certain incidents are witnessed only in public and cannot be hidden, and this happened by a single reporter, whereas the other people did not report them, this report is immediately rejected. Ibn Taymiyyah gives the example of building a city. If anyone narrates such a thing whereas other people in the vicinity have no idea about it, his report is directly dubbed untrue. This is because people are usually motivated to report and exchange things of this type.

Likewise, if it is claimed that the disbelievers at the time of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) could meet the challenge, and produced something like the Quran that could refute the Quran, this claim is straight away dropped, because this is of great interest to people to see and report. Since the interest is keen, and yet none reported it, then it is patent fabrication. Thus, the associates are clear indicators of the existence of things. However, some associates are clear to all; others are clear to specific people, such as the knowledgeable. This explains why specialists of *aḥādīth* rejected certain narrations without bothering to investigate into the men

who narrated them. They knew ways unknown to others although many ways are known to all. The same can be said about the signs of the Prophet, which are generally known to all; some are more knowable than the others are.

The facial expressions also signal to what the heart conceals. A man telling the truth and speaking his heart is easily distinguishable from the one who speaks contrary to what he conceals. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had the purest heart and the best intentions for his people and humanity in general. That is why he was selected by Allah. This is why some of those who saw the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for the first time could surely identify him as a prophet from Allah and converted on spot.

Ibn Taymiyyah said, “to know the veracity of the truthful and the falsehood of the liar is like other knowledge in that it may be axiomatically known without investigation or may be known after research and investigation.”<sup>62</sup> He also viewed that some people have expertise in discerning the liar from the truthful through the bodily appearances. Therefore, he elaborates that some people are able to decide whether the one who claims prophethood is a true prophet or an impostor without seeing his miracles. Abdullah bin Salam, the Jew, lived in Madīnah at the time of the Prophet. He converted to Islam only by looking at the face of the Prophet and that was enough for him to know the veracity of the Prophet. Many people are reported in the *ahādīth* collections to have recognized him at the first sight and meeting. The first batch to convert to Islam like Abu Bakr, Khadījah, and the others was before the splitting of the moon, the foretelling of things to come and before the challenge with the Quran to be met. They heard the Quran and it was enough for them to know that he was a prophet from Allah. Khadījah assured him that Allah will not disgrace him only due to what she had seen of his manners. Heraclius, the Roman Caesar, asked Abu Sufyān, the Qurayshite trader in his land, about qualities and manners of the Prophet to verify that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was truly a prophet. When they told him of the qualities and manners Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) possessed, he declared that he was a prophet and would possess the land under his rule at that time, i.e. the Byzantine Empire. These qualities as the Quran tells us are there in the previous scriptures. Those who were aware of them in the previous books such as the Jew rabbis in Madīnah could

determinedly assert he was a prophet. They used to admit that in their confidential counsels, and denied it outwardly.

Ibn Taymiyyah identified three groups who contradicted the prophets. They are:

1. The philosophers and esoteric infidels who thought that the prophets brought things out of their fantasy; they talked about the faith and the last day in an unrealistic manner so as to elude people into something beneficial. However, they count this to be a merit for the prophets.
2. Those of misinterpretation, who twisted the meaning the prophets intended in order to indoctrinate their own.
3. People seeking to drive people into ignorance; i.e. those who propound that the prophets themselves did not know what they were preaching. The meaning thereof was known exclusively to Allah.

However, the prophets including (a fortiori) our prophet are well identifiable by virtue of their moral, physical, spiritual and religious manifestations, as they are equally identifiable on the bases of their message and miracles. People who needed to know the Prophet were:

- People who have a preconception of a prophet to be raised, whose qualities would be such and such, as drawn in the previous scriptures. They therefore needed to check him against what they have already known. The Byzantine king was of this category.
- People who believed in the messengers in general, but were aware of the fact that a prophet would be raised. These need to know whether the one claiming prophethood is a prophet or not. They can recognize him through what is known of the qualities of the prophets. The prophets are in total agreement on the general principles, such as the monotheism, the Last Day, and the like. True news never contradicts; the prophets therefore do not discredit themselves. However, some of them may be more knowledgeable than the others are. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told about more things than Moses and Jesus. Believing that they contradicted each other or that they brought things contrary to reason is impossible. The rational

conjectures opposing the traditions must be wrong or the text or meaning reported from the prophets is not meticulously transmitted. Similarly, if contradictory texts/statements are reported from different prophets, one of the narrations must be wrong, or does not carry a meaning contrary to the prophet's statements.

Ibn Taymiyyah counterattacked the arguments of the Christians from their Bible, the Quran and through investigating into the doctrines and character of the followers. Moreover, he touched the verses they quoted to substantiate their claims and interpreted them according to the standard rules of commentaries set by orthodox scholars and concluded that the Christians wish to tamper with the Quran as they did with their Bible. He brought the Quran and the Bible along with logic to serve as testimonies against the Christians in a highly convincing manner.



<sup>1</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 51:56

<sup>2</sup> Abdullah bin Abbās said, “Between Adam and Noah are ten generations all adhering to truth. Then they diverged; whereupon, Allah sent prophets as warners and bringers of glad tidings (al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, *hadīth* no. 3654)

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 3:19

<sup>4</sup> *Al-Qur'ān* :3: 85

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 5:117

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 21:25

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*:16: 36

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 2:130

<sup>9</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, *hadīth* No. 2332

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*:3: 55

<sup>11</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 42: 13

<sup>12</sup> Allah says in the Quran 40: 51 “ We grant victory to our messengers and the people who believe”

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad al-imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal*, *hadīth* No. 14720

<sup>14</sup> In *Mathew*: 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

<sup>15</sup>*Al-Jawāb*: vol. 2, p. 438

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol.6, p.429

<sup>17</sup> *Deuteronomy*: 33:2:

<sup>18</sup>*Genesis*:16:12

<sup>19</sup> *Genesis*:16: 8-10

<sup>20</sup> *Genesis*: 21: 13-21

<sup>21</sup> *Palms*: 149: 1-7

<sup>22</sup> *Psalms*:45:3-4

<sup>23</sup> *Psalms*:48:1-2

<sup>24</sup>[Ibn Taymiyyah says it is in *Psalms*, whereas it is in *Isaiah*:42: 11

<sup>25</sup> *Isaiah*: 60: 1-8 and the whole chapter speaks about it, with the last verse being, “A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time”

<sup>26</sup> *Isaiah:21:7-9*

<sup>27</sup> *Isaiah:5:26-28*

<sup>28</sup> *Isaiah:54:1*

<sup>29</sup> *Isaiah:54:3*

<sup>30</sup> *Isaiah:9:6*

<sup>31</sup> *Isaiah:49:16-21*

<sup>32</sup> *Habakkuk:3:3-7*

<sup>33</sup> *Habakkuk:3:12-13*

<sup>34</sup> *Daniel:2:37-44*

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Jawāb: 5: 227*

<sup>36</sup> *John: 14:26*

<sup>37</sup> This is not found anywhere in the Christian books that discuss the etymology of the word. "Paraclete comes from the Koine Greek word *παράκλητος* (*paráklētos*, that can signify "one who consoles or comforts, one who encourages or uplifts; hence refreshes, and/or one who intercedes on our behalf as an advocate in court").[1] The word for paraclete is passive in form, and etymologically (originally) signified "called to one's side"." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraclete>, accessed on 28/09/2015). However, this passive meaning does not fit the (active) meaning they assign to it. Moreover, the Muslims assign to the word the meaning *ḥamd*, or praiseworthy on the bases of the Greek word they think the word is derived which is different from the word given by the Christians.

<sup>38</sup> *John:15:26 -27*

<sup>39</sup> *John:16:7-14*

<sup>40</sup> See *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 5, p.882

<sup>41</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 5, p. 287

<sup>42</sup> *John:14:30*

<sup>43</sup> *Mathew:21:42-44*

<sup>44</sup> *1Peter:4:17*

<sup>45</sup> *Al-Jawāb: vol.5, p. 386*

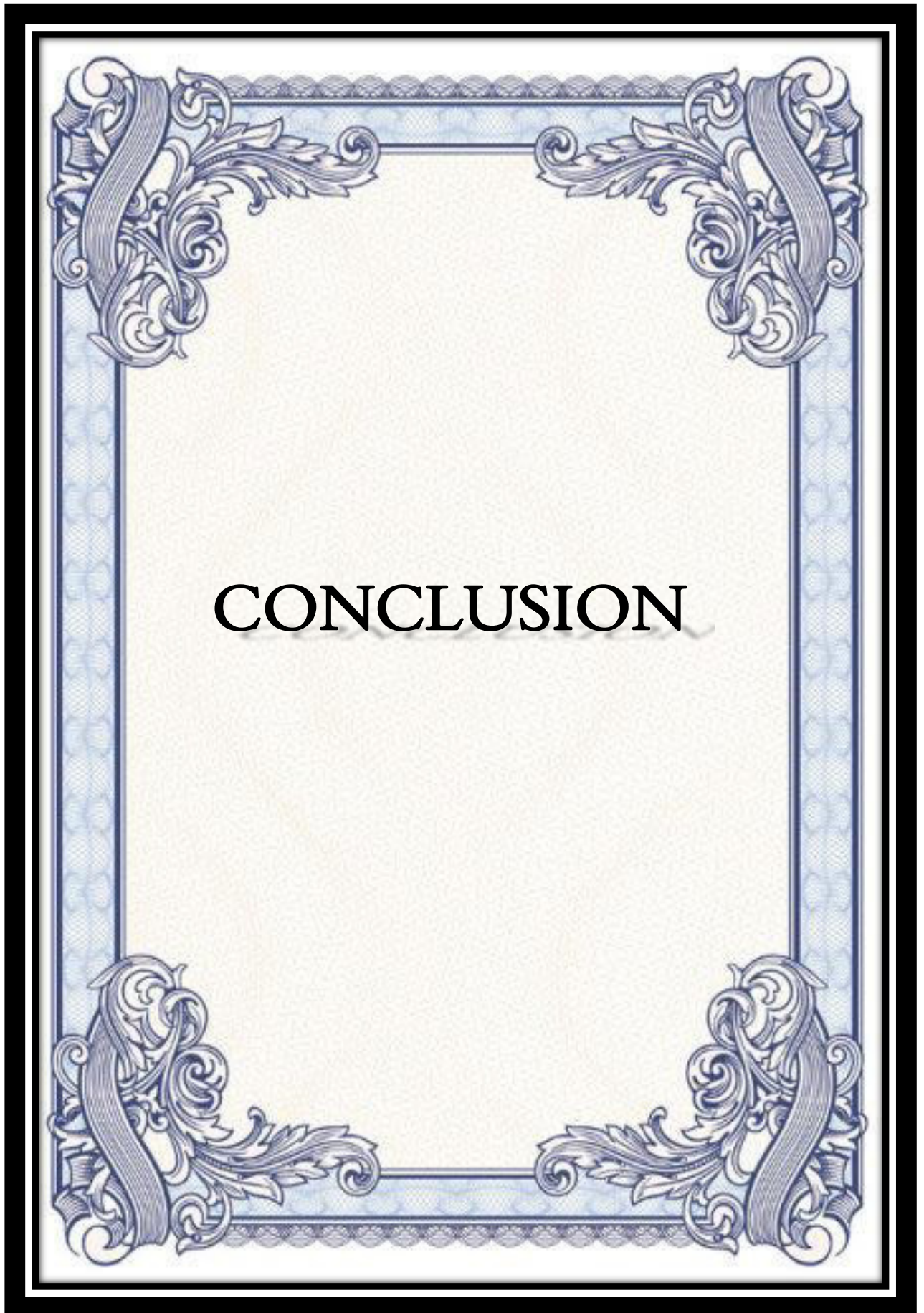
<sup>46</sup> His people acknowledged that the Quran was miraculous and imitable. They used to declare that among themselves, although in the face of Muhammad they used to make many claims they knew their fallacy.

<sup>47</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari, hadīth number: 1563*

<sup>48</sup> *Al-Qur'ān: 40: 51*

<sup>49</sup> *Al-Qur'ān: 2: 129*

- <sup>50</sup> Her animals were healthy and full of milk unlike those of her fellow villagers.
- <sup>51</sup> The coming down of angels and cutting open the chest of the prophet Muhammad and cleaning it.
- <sup>52</sup> Such as that mentioned in the *Quran*:8: 32
- <sup>53</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*: 2: 24
- <sup>54</sup> As in *Al-Qur'ān*:17: 88
- <sup>55</sup> The Quran makes a connection between the splitting of the moon and the approach of the Last Day in its- discussions of the matter. Moreover, the whole chapter was named after this incident (*Al-Qamar* or the moon) and starts right away from the beginning to discuss it.
- <sup>56</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 5, pp. 438-9
- <sup>57</sup> *Al-Jawāb*: vol. 5, p. 445
- <sup>58</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol.6, pp.44-45
- <sup>59</sup> The Quran talks about a group of jinn reporting this in the chapter named the Jinn.
- <sup>60</sup> On the bases of literary legacy, some scholars affirmed the falling of stars even before this debarment. This said debarment just intensified the punishment and made the falling more frequent and tense.
- <sup>61</sup> see *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 5, pp.146-161 and vol.6, p. 46
- <sup>62</sup> *Al-Jawāb*, vol. 6, p. 494





## **Conclusion**

Through Ibn Taymiyyah's discussions of the necessity of inter-faith dialogue and that it is one of the most important means of exposing the truth and how he himself wrote his voluminous book in actualization of this principle, Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah is rightly considered a staunch advocate of interfaith dialogue. He proposed that truth is to be revealed and conveyed to people in the best manner, and this is one of the major duties of scholars of Islam. He was not biased against the Christians on the bases of the long-lived animosities between the Christians and the Muslims. No carnages and oppression that were inflicted by the crusaders affected his response to his foes. Rather, he tried his best to refute the opinions made by some Muslim scholars that dialogue was abolished the time the Muslims were ordered to pick up the sword and fight back the disbelievers. He dedicated much space to prove that dialogue is always a means of showing the truth to the other and it will continue to be so. For this, he depicts much patience in tracing their argumentations and checks them individually.

However, he had been very cautious that the Muslims should not fall in the contradiction, cryptic dogma and the blasphemy of the Christians. For him as well as for any Muslim, salvation is conditional on following and the believing in Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as the seal of prophets and in his message as the final and comprehensive message. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah opposed strongly their claims of religious relativism and superiority of their religion. Furthermore, he warns the Muslims not to emulate them in their doctrines, rituals or festivals. This zeal of religious distinction gave momentum to his elaborative response.

For categorical refutation for the Christian allegations, Ibn Taymiyyah disproves their epistemological foundations. One of such foundations is the Quran. He asserts that the Christians have no right to quote the Quran when they do not believe in it. Although it is all right, it is epistemologically incoherent for them to support their claims with the Quran which they do not believe to be worthy of following. The Muslims, however, he assures, can quote the previous scriptures because they believe in them all as a pillar of Islam. However, one should differentiate between two kinds of quoting: one is done for supportive evidence and the other is done to provide areas of debate.

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah's assertion is tenable in the first type and not in the other. He himself does not believe in their book as being from God or authentic, yet he quotes it a great number of times, sometimes for supportive evidences and sometimes for quest of shortcomings and mistakes.

In their quoting the Quran, the Christians adopt many garbling methods to force the Quranic text to support their allegations. Through hermeneutical manipulations, they ascribe to the Quran meanings that do not comply with the language of the Quran and have no bases in the literature left by the Muslim exegetes. Being himself a great exegete and a master of Arabic, Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to know the right meaning through consulting a great number of references and carrying out a comparative study to reach the truth.

The Christians tried to demonstrate that the Quran, for example, acknowledged their religion and their different dogmas. Ibn Taymiyyah brings into light the Quran's affirmation that the Quran is revealed to dominate all previous books and its law to overwrite all legislations. Therefore, it is the standard criterion in any issue of dispute. Moreover, it bluntly declares that the Christians have committed blasphemy by upholding Trinity and divinity of the three persons. It also repudiates the various Christian dogmas and condemns the Christians for adhering to them.

Another epistemic foundation they base their arguments on is the Bible. According to a Quranic imperative, Muslims should believe in all scriptures including the one revealed to the Christ. Ibn Taymiyyah acknowledges the impeccability of this original book but propounds that such a book of purity and originality is no longer available anywhere. All that is written in the Bible is mere accounts of the life and character of the Christ, which the writers themselves never claimed to be exhaustive nor dictated by Christ. Such accounts lack continuous chain of narration. They are narrations that are stripped of the names of the people who transmitted them. The *aḥādīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are accompanied with the names of narrators and therefore anyone capable of authenticating such *aḥādīth* can trace the narrators and decide whether they are trustworthy or not, unlike the case of the Bible, where there is no chain of narrators. Thus, in terms of the nature and subject of the Bible as a biographical account of the life of Christ, it is similar to

the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Nevertheless, in terms of possibility of verifying the authenticity or otherwise the Bible does not allow for this process. Besides, the Bible contains other accounts and even incredible stories. It also contains many things that cannot be of divine origin, such as the verses that go against the principle of *tawhīd*, the infallibility and the high moral character of the prophets. Through this, Ibn Taymiyyah affirms that the Bible available is not Allah's word.

Ibn Taymiyyah admits, however, that a great portion of the Bible is still unchanged, and much of the truth is still there in it. He says that the truth remaining in the Bible is enough to lead the Christians to Islam. It contains many texts prophesying the advent of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and many descriptions of Islamic landmarks such as the *Ka'bah and Makkah*, the character of the *ṣaḥabah* and the noble descent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), etc. Ibn Taymiyyah displays great mastery of the Bible in picking up texts of the same theme from different places and juxtaposes them to form a coherent picture. Moreover, he seems to have a good knowledge of many versions of the Bible in some of which he asserts he saw the name of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) mentioned. It means that he came across versions difficult to find now. This poses a challenge for the researcher to trace such quotations in the Bible. His excessive use of the Bible is a clear indication that he is of the opinion that the Muslims in their dialogue with the Christians may use the Bible properly, unlike some scholars who rejected this method. It is noteworthy here to state that Ibn Taymiyyah never quoted the epistles of Paul. The reason is that Ibn Taymiyyah does not consider him a Christian, what to speak of his being an apostle of Christ, especially when it is common knowledge that he never met Christ and it was only through his alleged theophany that he became an apostle and saint.

Another epistemological foundation is the resolutions of the ecumenical councils. The creeds canonized in the different ecumenical councils by the church fathers are taken for granted and followed wholeheartedly by the Christian world. Ibn Taymiyyah argues that this is a divine right wrongly ascribed to such people as they are neither infallible nor are assigned by God to carry out this task. They merely tried to canonize a Trinitarian creed mentioned nowhere in the scriptures. Therefore, it is the greatest



error committed by the Christians. They followed them and deviated from the divine guidance extant even in the Bible. The deification of the Christ and the Holy Spirit as well as the affirmation of the Christ as co-eternal and consubstantial as the Father, have no precedents in any of the divine scriptures. Rather, these are clearly notions inherited from the Greek. Thus, the creeds that evolved in the ecumenical councils along the ages have no sound bases whatsoever. Through these discussions, Ibn Taymiyyah demolished their epistemological foundations.

Their metaphysics of the Christians was also one of the targets of Ibn Taymiyyah. In the Nicene counsel, the Son of God was regarded of the same substance as the Father. He was the word of God and said to have united with Christ. Through this union, Christ became fully human and fully divine. Besides, the heavens and the earth would not have been created without him. Ibn Taymiyyah seeks to identify what the word of God is. If it is an attribute of God then it cannot exist anywhere apart from him. Nor can such an attribute have any action of its own. For this reason, Ibn Taymiyyah examines many philosophical interpretations offered by different philosophers, including the forms of Plato and form-matter theory of Aristotle. He also discusses the accident essence dichotomy. He concludes that Christians' metaphysics are totally against reason. He bases his arguments on the following principles:

1. Reason and revelation never contradict. Based on this principle, he rejected the self-contradictory dogmas. With reference to Christianity, the Christ is declared to be God's creating word, which is eternal and of the same substance as the Father. God- the Father is the real Creator, beside whom there can be no creator. To declare that Christ is the creating word of God through whom all things came into being is sheer contradiction.

Moreover, to claim three persons, each is God but they are not three but one, is again a contradiction. Ibn Taymiyyah differentiates between what is incomprehensible and what is understood as impossible. In relation to religion, there may be things we are not able to fully comprehend, but there cannot be things that go against reason. The Christian doctrines are of the second category.

Further, the word of God cannot exist on its own right. Either it can be an attribute subsistent in Him or something possessed by Him, but is not part of Him. In the first case, the word of God cannot detach itself from Him and dwell anywhere in the world. In the second case, the word of God becomes among His creation, sharing nothing of His divinity. The divinity itself is the absolute right and epithet of God that none can share it. To claim three divine beings is totally against the divinity of the Absolute.

2. The second principle on which Ibn Taymiyyah build his arguments is that if two things unite they must become a third substance, sharing the properties of the two constituents, but is identical with neither. The word of God is believed by the Christians to have united with a created human. They also believe that the three hypostases united and formed one deity without any change or alteration. Therefore, after unification, they are one substance. They also claim that Christ is a true God from a true God of the same substance as his Father. They also claim that the human and divine united in Christ, and on the bases of this he is fully human and fully divine. Reasonably, both of the two characters; the Divine and the human will change. The notion of unification without change is against all reasonable thinking, let alone the fact that they advocate patent polytheism.
3. Another principle he posits is that the meaning of an utterance is governed by the intent of the speaker. Therefore, one should seek to understand the meaning of the phrases: 'son of God', 'the word of God', the Father, etc. The meaning of words uttered by the prophets should be maintained as intended by them. Ibn Taymiyyah accuses the Christians of attributing to the prophets meanings they never intended. Due to this, they deified some of God's creation. The terms the Father, the son of God, the children of God, the Holy Spirit and the like should be understood within context and in a manner that does not violate the principle of monotheism. Moreover, there is no specific meaning of the philosophical terms as the Christians are using, such as the substance, the incidence, quiddity and the like. The intent should be clear to judge conclusions accordingly.

The misuse of terminology caused doctrinal mistakes and led to great metaphysical errors in Christianity. The Christians' use of the *logos* in their apologies to the Hellenistic world granted polytheistic connotations to the Word of God stated in the scripture. Apart from this they used terms that are purely of the Greek philosophy but never used anywhere in the scripture such as the hypostases and the like. Through the dialectic discussions of Ibn Taymiyyah it is clear that he had good command of the meanings the 'word' or *logos* had been given. This is also clear when he says that Christianity is a mixture of the guidance of the prophets and the Greek philosophy, which he describes as pagan. He also asserts that the Roman kings played a major role in the alteration of the religion of Christ. Through the excavations of the mother of Constantine, the Cross became a sacred figure and symbol, and through the dream of Constantine himself, he ostensibly converted to Christianity to change it through his convening the council at Nicaea, which was the first formal step to divesting Christianity from monotheism. The subsequent Roman kings also made their contributions through their intervention in the formulations of creeds.

To safeguard against such confusion Ibn Taymiyyah argues that divine texts are of two types: those with categorical and clear meaning and those with allegorical and ambiguous meaning. The problem of the Christians is that they abandon the former in favor of the latter, whereas they should follow the other way around. The uncertain meaning of the allegorical texts should be checked against the clear ones. The Christians left the clear verses of the Bible stating the oneness of God and the helplessness and subordination of Jesus to Allah, and tried to accentuate the sonship and divinity of Christ as well as the deification of the Holy Spirit. All these flagrantly oppose the concept of *tawhīd*, which all prophets tried to indoctrinate in the minds of their peoples, and for which they were basically sent.

4. On the bases of this Ibn Taymiyyah forms another principle: that the religion of all prophets is one. Therefore, there should be no difference in their message. They all were sent for the sole purpose of teaching people to dedicate worship absolutely to Allah and to submit to His Will. As these are the connotations of Islam, all prophets' religion is Islam, as declared by them in the Quran in different places. However, this should not be understood to mean that the practical law is the same in all religions. Allah dictates laws

according to His knowledge of people's capacity and welfare, and according to His infinite wisdom, He abrogates certain laws after he had made them obligatory to follow. This applies to the same religion as it applies to the abrogation between other religions.

Regarding prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the Christians claimed that he was sent to the Arabs and none else. Ibn Taymiyyah formed a rule here: that discussing veracity of the Prophet is prior to discussing whether he was a universal messenger. Admitting for him that he was a prophet, is tantamount to affirming that he never lies. It follows then that whatever he says is true and since the Christians acknowledge his prophethood then they must believe in whatever he says. It is illogical to believe in someone as a prophet but at the same time disbelieve in his claim of universality of message. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) very often affirmed that he was sent to the whole world. This statement is said by someone whom the Christians believe to be a prophet. Therefore, they must accept his claim that he was sent to the whole world including the Christian world.

Another rule regarding the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is that he is like the messengers whom the Christians read in their books Moses and Jesus. Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) claimed what they claimed. Therefore, the Christians should apply the same criteria by which they knew the truthfulness of these prophets to judge the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). All is needed is to check the veracity of his prophethood, then the question of universality is verified through his own claim. Whatever a prophet says is true, and should be accepted.

Another generalization is that all evidences that testified to the prophethood of the prophets who the Christians claim to believe in and follow are more abundantly available for Muhammad the prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Therefore, the Christians should follow all the prophets or leave them all. Their selective approach is not logical. Apart from that, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is proven as a prophet through the Bible, the Quran and his miracles part of which was telling about the events to come in the future, which came

true as precisely as he declared them. Further, the Bible is full of texts that apply exclusively to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The Christians contradict themselves when they affirm the prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) but disbelieve in the universality of his message. They do the same contradiction when they quote the Quran and disbelieve in some of it or misinterpret it in the manner that suits their doctrines.

Ibn Taymiyyah deploys rational as well as scriptural (biblical and Quranic) evidences for almost every issue he discusses to refute the erroneous illogical metaphysical and theological allegations. With his polemical and dialectical skill as well as his mastery of philosophy and logic and his awareness of the scriptures of the three religions and the Christian sectarian differences, he disproves all anti-Islamic notions that might lead astray the Muslims who have been his major concern in his responses to the Christians. He builds his arguments on logical rules that the opponent can but accept. Whenever, he deals with any controversial issue, he would normally discuss the counter arguments. Furthermore, he is never seen affirming things biasedly without coherent epistemic bases or textual evidences; although as a human being, he must have missed the truth. For example, he claimed that the Christians believed that the Satan took to his prison those sinners before the sacrifice of Christ and that the Christ disguised himself lest he should be known by the Satan in order to liberate the people through the crucifixion plan from the repercussions of their sins.

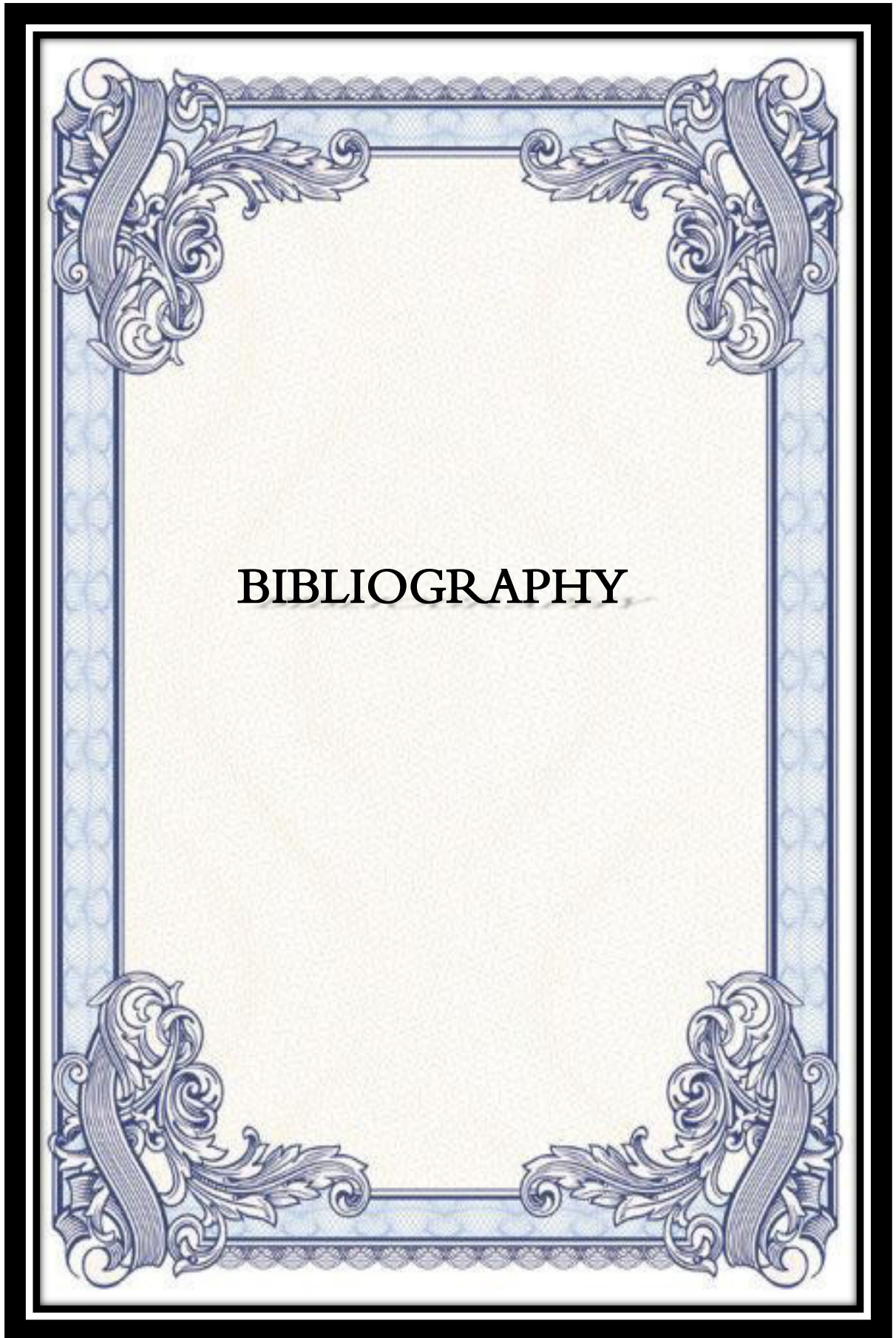
A man who is a staunch advocate of interfaith dialogue and who goes with his opponents through this very long discursive argumentation, using reason and scriptures of both religions, and who builds his theological edifice on sound rational rules, letting the religious and political hostilities of the past not affect his judgments, can be confidently considered as the epitome of magnanimity and tolerance. He tried to link people directly to the divine text beyond the boundaries of the four schools of law and re-opened the door to *ijtihad* for those qualified for it. Even in matters where he stands as a hard-liner, he welcomed all sound academic criticism and was ever ready to involve in any face-to-face debate with any one, including those whom he considered as heretics.

Ibn Taymiyyah's main aim was to exalt Allah high above the image the Christians made for Him. Therefore, the legacy he left revolves around laying the rational foundation of *tawhīd* as described by the prophets, not emulating the popular dogma. That is why he rejected the Trinity, incarnation and unification of God with anything. Rather, he accentuated the God-creation contradistinction and this rendered the *tawhīd* his overarching theme in the whole work to safeguard against any infiltration of these false and anti tawhidic elements into the Muslim lands and minds. Moreover, he revolted against all long-fossilised erroneous notions that led the Muslim community to conflict, decadence or blind imitation, and tried to bind all under the guidance of the Prophet and the early pure generations.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Ibn Taymiyyah frequently quotes the Bible in his response to the Christians especially when he wants to prove that the Bible talks about some Islamic landmarks such as the name of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his ancestors' origin, the *Ka'bah*, *Makkah* and the like. The researcher pursued him in the Bible in most of the cases. However, some of the texts particularly those that include Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) by name are not found. Ibn Taymiyyah said that he himself found some biblical excerpts wherein Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was mentioned by name. It is recommended, therefore, that a research be carried out in search of such texts. They most probably are retained in some of the versions of the Bible.









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